



# **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**Updated April 2017**

**Next Review Date – April 2020**

# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

1.1 We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

## 2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

## 3. The complaints process

### How to share a concern

3.1 If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

### What to do if the matter is not resolved through informal discussion

3.2 Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

### Sharing a concern about the headteacher

3.3 Should a parent have a complaint about the headteacher, s/he should first make an approach to The Chair of the Governing Body, (through the school office) who is obliged to look into it. The Chair of Governors will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below. A list of Governor names is available from the school office.

### How to take the matter further

3.4 If a complaint is unresolved the matter becomes a more formal complaint to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made on the school complaints form, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors.

The Governing Body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It arranges a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invites the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

Complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any governor that might need to be on a panel associated with a complaint.

A panel of two Governors and one independent member will hear the complaint. The terms of reference for the panel are to:

- Draw up its procedures;
- Hear individual complaints;
- Make one or more of the recommendations below as a result of complaints.

Remit of the Complaints Panel – the complaints panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part;
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the school's systems, procedures, or policies to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Panel members – points to remember – there are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No Governor will sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, Governors will ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Governors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may well be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will

ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

- Extra care will need to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- The Governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

#### Roles and Responsibilities –

The role of the clerk – The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and is required to:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- Record the proceedings and notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The role of the chair of the complaints panel – is to ensure that:

- There is a check that the correct procedure has and is being followed;
- If a hearing is appropriate, that the clerk is notified to arrange the panel;
- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions, written material is seen by all parties;
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it
- The chair of the panel will ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this will usually take place within five working days.

#### Checklist for the panel hearing –

- The hearing is informal as possible,
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence,

- If the hearing is to meet with the parties individually –
  - The panel will meet with the complainant and any witnesses, they will then leave;
  - The panel will then meet with head teacher and any witnesses to hear the school's response to the complaint.
  - After each meeting the chair will explain the time scales as to when all parties will hear from the panel.
  - The panel decides on the issues.
- If the hearing is to meet with all parties concerned at the same time -
  - After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
  - The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken,
  - The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses,
  - The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken,
  - The panel may ask questions at any point,
  - The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint,
  - The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint,
  - The chair of the panel will explain the time scales as to when all parties will receive notification of their decision,
  - All parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.

After hearing all the evidence, the Governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

#### Who to appeal to next

3.5 If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Local Authority (LA). A complaints form can be found on [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk).

### **4. Monitoring and review**

4.1 The Governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher notes complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved, if appropriate. Governors examine this information if required.

4.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

**Annex A**

**School Complaints Procedure Complaint Form**

**Your Name:**

**Pupil's name:**

**Your relationship to the pupil:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Daytime telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**Please give details of your complaint:**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**School use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**