

The Furze-Warren Hard Federation 2017-2018

Complaints Policy



**Warren Junior
School**



**Furze Infants
School**

Signed Chair of Governors:

Date: 13th October 2016

The Furze-Warren Hard Federation

Complaints Policy and Procedures

1 Introduction

At the Furze-Warren Hard Federation we strive to provide an outstanding education for all our children. The Executive Headteacher, Deputy Executive Headteacher, Heads of School and staff work very hard to build positive relationships. However, the federation is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints relating to the schools and to any community facilities or services that the federation provides. The following policy sets out the procedures that the federation follows in such cases.

The scope of the policy relates to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned, except matters which are subject to separate procedures (such as exclusions or admissions).

There is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. The federation takes informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

This policy is available from the school offices and will be published on our websites.

2 Aims

The Furze-Warren Hard Federation aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. Careful consideration is given to all complaints and they are dealt with as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved within established time limits.

3 The complaints process

Stage 1. Informal Stage

Expression of concern

The complainant is normally expected to arrange to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Executive Headteacher. An unreasonable refusal to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated forthwith. Any dispute in relation to the "reasonableness" may be determined through the review process.

Stage 2. Formal Stage

Formal complaints should be made by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment to the Head of School. The Head of School considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. The Head of School reserves the right to allocate the investigation to another member of staff where deemed appropriate. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The outcome of the Head of School investigation will be communicated within 20 school days with full explanation of the decision and the reason for it, as well as any action taken.

If the complaint is about the Head of School the matter should be referred to the Executive Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher the matter should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 3. Governing Body Review

Complaints rarely reach this formal level

Complaints at this stage should be received within 10 school days of the Head of School's decision. A letter (or meeting if requested) should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and should set out why the complainant remains unhappy and what the desired outcome should be. The Governing Body Complaints Committee will consist of 3 people – none of whom will have been previously involved in the complaint. They will let the complainant know within 20 school days of receiving complaint the date when it is to be considered. If a further meeting with the complainant is considered necessary adequate notice will be given to prepare. The committee will make their decision in private and inform the complainant within 7 school days.

In the case of a vexatious complaint where despite all stages of this policy being followed the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to re-open the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform the complainant in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

4 Investigating complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that:

- All communication should be made by letter, phone call or in person by appointment with records kept. Meetings can be booked by phone with the admin staff.
- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes and have a minute taker in all meetings.

5 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint schools and the complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld.
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

6. Monitoring and review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Heads of School log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

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.

If a complainant believes the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representations to the Secretary of State.

All SLT members will be fully aware of procedures and trained accordingly and will be involved in reviewing the policy. All staff to be aware that the Executive Headteacher, Deputy Executive Headteacher or Heads of School will handle all formal complaints. This policy is reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.