



Tredington Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Reviewed September 2019

Next review date September 2020

We aim to develop in our children a passion for learning; strong moral, social and cultural values; a hard working 'Can do' attitude; the ability to communicate with others clearly and a desire to explore and understand the world around them.

Our school mission statement is: Friends Learning Together. Explore, Create and Share.

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Policy on Complaints

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

1 Introduction

1.1 We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Head teacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers and other stakeholders. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints. Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). Schools must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

1.2 If any parents or carers are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

1.3 We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures laid down by the LA. If the school itself cannot resolve a complaint, those concerned can refer the matter to the LA.

1.4 All parents and carers have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

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. 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.

3 The complaints process

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. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

3.2 Where parents or carers feel 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 Head teacher. The Head teacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.

3.3 If a parent has a complaint about the Head teacher a written complaint should be made to the chair of governors. This complaint must be made in writing, 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.

3.4 The governing board must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

3.5 After hearing all the evidence, the governors will 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.

3.6 If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

3.7 If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

4 Serial and Persistent Complainants

4.1 The school will do its best to be helpful to people who contact them with a complaint or concern or a request for information. However, in cases where the school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks them to reconsider their position, schools will need to act appropriately. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. It is important for the school to recognise when we really have done everything we can in response to a complaint.

It is a poor use of schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. However, the school will be careful that they do not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

More information about dealing with vexatious requests for information is available on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website.

The decision to stop responding will never be taken lightly. A school will need to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any);
- They are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time. The case is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:
 - The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience - have they actually said as much in a letter, email or telephone call?
 - Their letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.
 - They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.

The schools will not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. In most circumstances the subject matter is what you can refuse to respond to, not the correspondent.

The school must provide parents with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005. However, where an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption the school may wish to implement a tailored communications strategy such as restricting them to a single point of contact via an email address or by limiting the number of times they make contact; e.g. a fixed number of contacts per term.

Complainants have a right to have any new complaint heard and failure to respond at all to a complainant could mean that the school is failing to comply with its legal obligations.

The school will ensure that they are acting reasonably and that any genuine complaint can still be heard. If school staff find it difficult to deal direct with a complainant because of their unreasonable behaviour and other strategies are not

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working, they may be able to approach the governor services team at their LA to ask for assistance. If this is agreed, complainants can be advised not to contact the school, but to communicate instead with the LA who will co-ordinate any response. Complainants who may have been restricted in their communications with the school can also be advised to ask a third party to act on their behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice Bureau. Ultimately, if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice should be sought as to the next steps. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders have been issued to complainants because of their behaviours.

4.2 Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The school will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community. If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the school will ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Head teacher or the local authority will notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make.

The schools will always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Head teacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

5 Monitoring and review

5.1 The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head teacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

5.2 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 and carers, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

5.3 This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

Policy Review

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the full governing board on the following meeting date:

Meeting Date: 24.09.19

Chair of Governors: Alan Upton _____ (sign)