



Woodford Green Primary School

Complaints Policy

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WOODFORD GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

Our motto at Woodford Green Primary School is
Work Grow Play Succeed



INTRODUCTION

1. This policy is in accordance with the Education Act 2002, section 29, which states that all maintained schools such as Woodford Green Primary, have a policy of complaints procedures available to be publicised. This policy documents the procedures in place to deal with complaints relating to the school and any community facilities or services the school provides.

A General principles of complaints

a) Initial Concerns:

1. The school will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the incidence of more formal complaints.
2. In most cases the class teacher or individual delivering the service will receive the first approach. Staff will attempt to resolve issues on the spot – including apologies if necessary.

b) Formal procedures:

1. This will take place when initial attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful and person raising a concern feels unsatisfied and wishes to take the matter on to the next phase.
2. In most cases the next stage will be negotiated by the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

c) The Framework of Principles:

1. The procedure will follow effective steps:
 - Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
 - Be easily accessible and publicised
 - Be simple to understand and follow through
 - Be impartial
 - Be non-adversarial
 - Allow swift handling with agreed time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
 - Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person if necessary.
 - Respect a person's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the School Management Team so that services can be improved.

d) Investigating Complaints

1. The member of staff investigating the complaint will:
 - Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
 - Clarify the nature of the complaint and remains unresolved
 - Meet the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
 - Clarify what the complainant feels would put the matter right
 - Interview those involved in the matter and / or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
 - Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to continue / persist in the questioning
 - Keep notes of the interview

e) Resolving Complaints

1.
 - An apology
 - An explanation
 - An admission that the event or complaint of will not reoccur
 - An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
 - An undertaking to review school policies in the light of the complaint
2. The complainant should be encouraged to state their ideas as to how the situation may be resolved and by what actions. An admission that the handling of the situation could have been bettered is not the same as the school admitting negligence.
3. Areas of agreement between both parties must be identified; likewise any misunderstandings should be clarified so that positive attitudes in a positive atmosphere will prevail.

f) Vexations Complaints

1. A good complaints procedure will normally limit the number of complaints that become protracted cases.
2. If there is an occasion where, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant feels dissatisfied, they may try to re-open the case; it is then that the Chair of the Governing Body will write to them, telling them that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is closed.

g) Time Limits

1. Complaints need to be dealt with quickly: they need to be considered and resolved as quickly as is possible. It must be done efficiently.
2. An effective procedure will set realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, new limits may be issued if further investigations are required, the complainant will receive notification of the new time details and an explanation for any delay in the process.

B The Formal Complaints Procedure

a) The Stages of Complaints

1. The school policy has well-defined stages. It states exactly who will be involved, and what will happen, and how long it will take.
2. The school based stage is in 3 parts:
 - Stage One: complaint received by class teacher
 - Stage Two: complaint heard by Head Teacher (or Deputy Head Teacher in absence of Head Teacher)
 - Stage Three: complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeal panel.
3. Regardless of these 3 stages, an unsatisfied complainant can take a complaint onwards to another stage where the Local Authority will be involved. It will provide a vehicle for an independent appeal or review.
4. The procedure will clarify how to proceed if the issue concerns the Head Teacher or a governor, or where the Head Teacher or Governor has been involved in an issue previously.
5. When a Governor is approached as a first point of contact, the next step is to refer the complainant to the appropriate person in the procedure chain. No Governor should act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure nor should they be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to be a panel member at a later stage.

a) Stage One: complaint received by class teacher

1. Where a class teacher receives a complaint and deals with it, the Head Teacher will be notified of the outcomes and resolution. The class teacher may feel they need to pass it forward to Stage Two.

b) Stage Two: complaint heard by Head Teacher

1. The Head Teacher's decision to take forward the complaint may involve referring the case back to the Deputy or other SMT member to deal with. Where this happens, feedback will be given to the head.
2. The action to be taken will be made by the Head.

c) Stage Three: complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

1. If a complainant writes to the Chair of Governors, the Chair will convene a Governing Body complaints panel (in the absence of the Chair, this will be carried out by a nominated substitute).
2. The Governors' Appeal Hearing will be the last school-based stage in the process, and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous attempts to resolve issues.
3. Complaints will not be heard by the full Governing Body at any stage – this would compromise the impartiality of a panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
4. The Governing Body may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and will set out its terms of reference.

5. The terms of reference may include: a) drawing up its procedures; b) hearing individual appeals; c) making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.
6. The procedure will follow the school's complaints procedure.
7. The panel will consist of 3 to 5 people.
8. The panel will elect their own Chair.

e) The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

1. The panel can:
 - a) dismiss the complaint in part or whole
 - b) uphold a complaint in part or whole
 - c) decide on the appropriate course of action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - d) recommend changes to the school's systems or policies to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur
2. The make up of the panel will try to ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Governor and is sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
3. The aim of the hearing is:
 - a) to resolve the complaint
 - b) to achieve reconciliation between the school and complainant
 - c) to take the complaint seriously
 - d) to understand that the complainant may not be satisfied if the panel does not find in their favour
4. The panel needs to be aware of the needs of both adults and children. Careful setting of the tone and environment must be acknowledged.
5. The Governors on the panel must be aware of the Complaints Procedure.

f) Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Role of the Clerk is to:
 - a) set the date, time and venue of the hearing: ensuring that all these are convenient to all parties; to organise translation facilities if necessary
 - b) ensure that the venue is available and is accessible
 - c) collate any written material and send it out to the parties in advance of the hearing
 - d) meet and welcome the parties before the hearing
 - e) record the proceedings
 - f) notify all parties of the panel's decision
2. The Role of the Chair is to:
 - a) check that the correct procedure has been followed
 - b) notify the clerk if hearing is appropriate
3. The Role of the Chair of the Panel is to:
 - a) ensure that the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without due interruption
 - b) make sure the issues are addressed
 - c) ensure that key facts are known and findings are made

- d) ensure that adults or children who are not used to speaking at such hearings are put at ease
- e) make sure that the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- f) ensure that the panel is open-minded and acting independently

- g) make sure that no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings
- h) see that each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions
- i) make sure that written material is seen by all parties
- j) see that any new material is given to all parties to consider

4. Notification of the Panel's Decision

1. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with panel's response; this will be done within set time deadlines.
2. The letter will explain the decision and give advice for further assistance if necessary.

g) The Panel Hearing: the agenda:

1. The hearing will be as informal as possible.
2. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part in which they give evidence.
3. After instructions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by witnesses.
4. The Head Teacher may question both the complainant and witnesses after each has spoken.
5. The Head Teacher will then explain the school's actions, followed by witnesses.
6. The complainant may question the Head Teacher and witnesses after each have spoken.
7. The panel may ask questions at any time.
8. The complainant then can sum up their complaint.
9. The Head Teacher then can sum up the school's response.
10. Both parties will leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
11. The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel with the time deadline already agreed.

h) Managing and Recording Complaints

1. Recording Complaints

- a) The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome.
- b) A complaint can be made in person, by phone or in writing:- a Complaint Procedure form will be available at the Office (see Appendix 1).
- c) At the end of a phone call or meeting, staff members must ensure that all parties have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed.
- d) A brief note of meetings and calls will be kept and copies made of any written response added to the record.
- e) The Head Teacher will be responsible for the centrally held records.

2. Governing Body Review

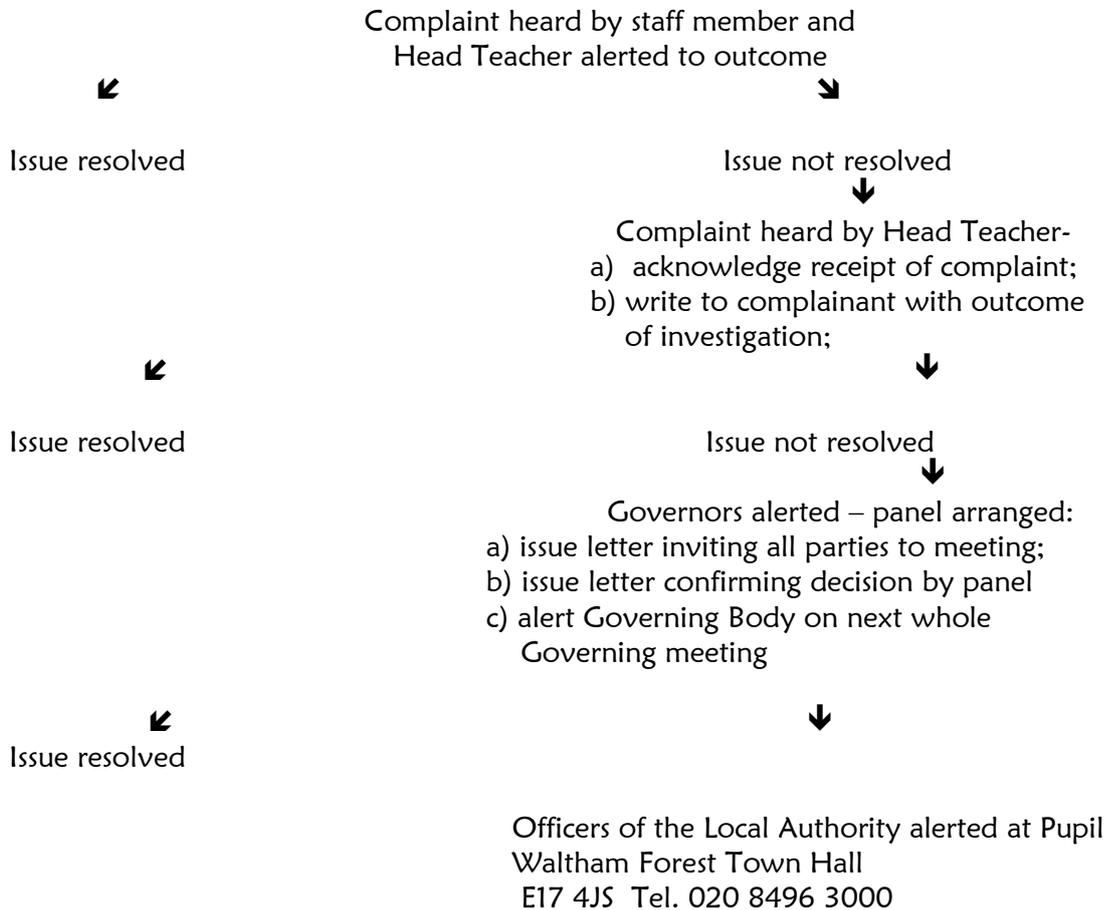
- a) The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review outcomes on a regular basis to secure the effectiveness of procedure.
- b) They will make necessary changes.
- c) Complainants will be anonymous when discussed by the whole Governing Body.
- d) Monitoring by the Governing Body will be a tool in self evaluation for the whole school.

3. Procedure Sharing

- a) It is a legal requirement that the Complaints Procedure is available to the public.
- b) It will be in a précis form in the school handbook.
- c) A full version will be available on request at the school office.

In Conclusion:

Here is a brief synopsis of the Complaints Procedure



School Complaints Procedure

Appendix 1

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to (complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time 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)?

School Complaints Procedure

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: