



Complaints Policy – Sept 2023 (review Sept 2024)

The staff and governors at Parklands Primary School recognise that every well governed and well managed school will from time to time have to deal with complaints from parents.

Most concerns and complaints will be resolved informally by the school staff and few will lead to a formal process. The governing body must ensure, therefore, that proper procedures are in place.

SCHOOL GRIEVANCE POLICY STATEMENT

This policy statement sets out the school's approach to dealing with parental concerns and complaints. Further details of how we handle them are contained in our procedures document, **Dealing with Complaints about School, A Practical Toolkit for Parents and Governors, October 2014**, which you can obtain on request from the school office.

We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.

We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.

All school staff and members of the governing body will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with parental concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required. The policy is available on request to parents.

The school's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.

Staff and governors will receive training in handling parental concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis, or as a group activity for all staff, or for specific groups, such as the office staff or members of the governing body.

Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our opinion to close a complaint before all the stages of the school's procedures have been exhausted, if this appears to be appropriate.

The government and the Local Authority (LA) advocate resolution of parental concerns and complaints at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations. The role of the LA in advising parents and schools on the handling of concerns and complaints is set out in the school's procedures.

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INFORMAL PRE-COMPLAINT STAGE - Dealing with concerns

All concerns should be treated seriously. The member of staff should make a brief note of the concerns and an indication of the outcome of the discussion.

- It should be made clear to the complainant, at the earliest possible stage, whether or not the outcome they are seeking is realistic. If it is not and a compromise is unlikely, they should be advised to make a formal complaint, using the complaints form, and be advised of the formal complaints procedure. It would be important to ask what outcome the complainant is expecting to ensure there is no misunderstanding.
- If a member of staff becomes aware that someone is likely to lodge a formal complaint, they should inform the head teacher, and pass on any information they hold about the issue. Staff should be given clear guidance on the school's procedure, particularly about when it is appropriate to refer the matter on and to whom. Time and care spent at this early stage can prevent a concern from becoming a formal complaint.
- If a concern relates to a school policy rather than a particular incident, e.g. policy on school dress, timing of school day, it would be more appropriate for the issue to be referred directly to the head teacher. Where possible, people should be invited to put their comments in writing, with assistance if necessary, and these can then be used to inform any review of the policy. A written acknowledgement should be sent telling them when and how the matter will be considered.
- If it is clear that a number of people share a concern the matter should be dealt with as a matter of urgency to avoid escalation of the issue within the parent community.

➤ *More advice and guidance is given in Part IV of the Practical Toolkit*

FORMAL STAGE 1: Official Complaint

Where a person has not been able to resolve a concern informally, they are entitled to ask the head teacher or a senior member of staff nominated by the head teacher, to investigate the issue. The complaint should be put in writing to the head teacher, ideally using the formal complaints form

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In all cases, the form should include details of the complaint, action already taken to resolve the complaint and what actions might help resolve the problem.

Formal complaints should be lodged as soon as possible, but no later than three months of the incident or issue occurring.

There may be certain exceptions to this, for example, for complaints involving allegations with child protection implications, where it is necessary to conduct an investigation sometime after the event.

Acknowledgement within three school days:

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within three school days and will specify how the complaint will be investigated, by whom and the timescale within which a full response will be made.

Full response within 15 school days.

The head teacher will ensure that a thorough investigation is carried out and a full written response is made within 15 school days. If the timescale needs to be extended (for example, if meetings with complainants or relevant people cannot be arranged within this timescale) complainants will need to be informed.

➤ *More advice and guidance is given in Part IV of the Practical Toolkit.*

EXCEPTIONS

Complaints about the head teacher

A complaint about the head teacher should be made in writing to the **chair of governors**. This may include a complaint about the actions or lack of actions of the headteacher in investigating a complaint. The governing body should consider appointing a designated governor to investigate the complaint as a stage one complaint. Where a complaint is about the conduct of the head teacher, the chair of governors should seek advice from the school's personnel officer at the LA.

Complaints about the chair of governors

These should be made in writing to the **vice-chair of governors**. Procedural advice and guidance should also be sought from the LA governor support service or customer relations service.

Complaints about issues covered by other statutory procedures.

Where complaints concern issues that are covered by other statutory procedures, for example,

school admissions or exclusions, then those specific procedures and related timescales will apply instead.

Complaints involving a claim for compensation.

Schools should refer any claims for compensation directly to the schools claims financial adviser in the LA.

REPORTING THE OUTCOME

A full written response should be made to complainants who may be offered a further meeting to explain how the investigation was carried out and how decisions were reached. The decision at the end of formal stage one is final. The only exception to this is if in investigating the complaint, the head teacher or governor did not conduct a full and fair investigation and therefore did not arrive at the decision fairly, then may be an opportunity to review the decision at Formal Stage 2.

Complainants will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint has been handled, they may refer the matter to the governing body. This should be done by writing to the chair of governors **within 10 school days** of receipt of the letter from the head teacher and chair of governors.

FORMAL STAGE 2: Review to panel of governors

The governors' review panel

If complainants are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled at Stage 1, there will be a further and final right of review to a specially convened panel of governors.

Lodging review within 10 school days.

Reviews should be lodged in writing with the chair of governors within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 decision.

Convene panel meeting within 20 school days.

The review panel will meet within 20 school days of receiving the complaint. The complainants and the headteacher or appropriate investigating officer (or governor if the stage one complaint was about the head teacher) will be informed of the date, time and venue of the appeal hearing.

The panel will comprise at least three governors who have had no previous knowledge of or involvement in the case. The panel should not include staff governors.

Remit of the governors' panel

The panel will consider the way the complaint has been investigated and handled by the school (or governor if it is about the head teacher). The panel will carry out a review of the investigation carried out at formal stage one. It will hear the report of the investigating officer at stage one and any submissions on that report by the complainant.

The review **should not entail a rehearing** of the case.

- *More advice and guidance is given in Part IV of the Practical Toolkit.*

Decision within three school days.

The decision of the panel is final and will be communicated in writing to complainants and the head teacher within three school days.

SECRETARY OF STATE REVIEW

A further stage of appeal can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education, but only on the grounds that the governing body is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or illegally.

- *More advice and guidance is given in Part IV of the Practical Toolkit.*