



## Northchapel Community Primary School

### Dealing with School Complaints

[Northchapel Behaviour Policy Ref POL008]

<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Summer 2019</b>
<b>Reviewed By</b>	<b>H Coleman</b>
<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Anthea Martin-Jenkins</b>
<b>Due for next review</b>	<b>Summer 2020</b>

#### Introduction

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring the highest standards across all spheres of the school's work. However, we recognise that dissatisfactions may arise. This policy has been written to ensure that all issues are dealt with fairly and efficiently. It is based on the model policy issued by West Sussex Schools Support Team in September 2010. This complaints policy does not apply to a decision about admissions to the school, or a matter in respect of which the pupil or parent has or had a prescribed right of appeal. The School and Governing Body aim to deal with all complaints openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice.

#### Aims

1. To resolve issues through dialogue at the appropriate level
2. To guide all parties in a fair hearing of issues and processes to be followed Principles The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at school level in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered in exceptional circumstances:

- Stage 1 is the informal stage. In the case of a complaint by a parent, the class teacher will receive the first approach and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the school office should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint.
- Stages 2 and 3 are formal stages involving the Headteacher and governing body.

This policy is designed to manage all complaints, but complaints vary in their nature and complexity. Therefore, the school will need to consider at which stage a complaint should be dealt with when it is initially raised and which member of staff is best placed to deal with it. If the complaint is about a member of staff this should be

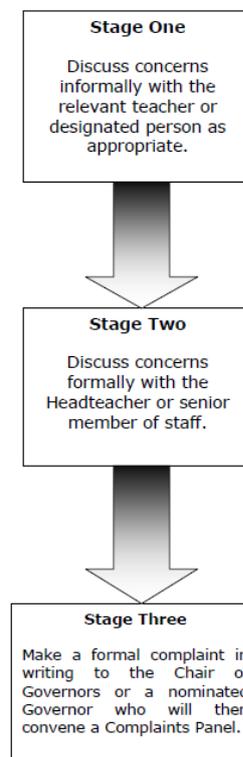
dealt with by the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is unable to resolve the matter, or the complaint is about the Headteacher the complaint will pass to the Governing Body.

## Principles and Procedures

All complaints will be dealt with openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice. Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people'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's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

### Overview of Complaints Process



There are three stages to this procedure:

- Stage 1 is informal
- Stages 2 and 3 are formal

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

#### Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

- Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.

- If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Complaints Coordinator Teacher should monitor these records.
- If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the Headteacher or a senior member of staff should be contacted.

**Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.**

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the Headteacher or a senior member of staff. He / she will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.
- A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept
- The Headteacher or Senior Teacher should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details should remain confidential to the Headteacher. However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.

**Stage Three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or a nominated governor) who will then convene a Complaints Panel.**

- Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted.
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the clerk to the governing body within 5 school days. Stage Two Discuss concerns formally with the Headteacher or senior member of staff Stage Three Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors or a nominated governor who will then convene a Complaints Panel 4
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint at this stage. Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. However, the governing body will usually convene a small panel of 3 or 5 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel should notify the Headteacher and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Headteacher is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Headteacher has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
- The Headteacher and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days.
- This is the final stage in the school's Complaints Procedure.

## Conclusion

If the complainant remains dissatisfied and both the complaint and complainant fall within the definitions stated in Chapter 2 of Part 10 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, the complainant can refer the complaint to the Local Ombudsman (with effect from September 2011) for consideration

Contact Details:

### **The Local Government Ombudsman**

Address: PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EL

Telephone: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

Email: [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk)

### **Ofsted**

Address: Royal Exchange Buildings

St Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Telephone: 0845 640 4045

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

### **Department for Education**

Address: Secretary of State

Department for Education

Sanctuary Buildings

Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

Telephone: 0870 000 2288