

Aldryngton Primary School				
Policy	C11	General Complaints Procedure		
Approved	15 January 2019	Signed		
Website	Yes	Chair, Curriculum and Committee		
Review	Triennial	Next review	January 2022	

General complaints

This policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. In the main this will mean the parents and carers of the school's pupils, but may include parents and carers of pupils who are no longer at the school, neighbours of the school, or any other members of the local community. Every effort will be made to resolve all complaints received. Complaints will always be investigated so that the school can ensure that all current statutory duties are being met, and to provide written records for future reference.

Informal stage

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly with your child's class teacher. If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the relevant Team leader or Headteacher.

- Lower School Team Leader
Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2
- Middle School Team Leader
Year 3 and Year 4
- Upper School Team Leader
Year 5 and Year 6

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. Most concerns and potential complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion with the relevant member of staff.

Formal stages

Procedural guidance for school staff regarding monitoring and responding to formal complaints is available in Appendix 1

Stage 1 (Headteacher)

If you are dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the headteacher if they have been involved at the informal stage) then you may wish to put your concerns in writing to the headteacher as a complaint. You should make it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint. The headteacher should formally acknowledge the complaint within 3 school days of receiving it and will begin an investigation. The HT will provide a full written response within 10 school days of acknowledging your letter, but you will be kept informed if, for example, more time is needed to complete the investigation.

This response will determine whether, or not, the complaint has been upheld, the reasons why, and what action (if any) will be taken. The response will provide details of how to move on to the next stage, if the complainant is not satisfied.

If your original concern was about an action by the headteacher personally, and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Chair of governors (stage 2).

Stage 2 (Chair of Governors)

If you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response, you may write directly to the Chair of governors via the school office.

The Chair of governors will formally acknowledge your complaint within 3 school days of receiving it and begin an investigation. They will, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion with yourself and the headteacher. At the end of this stage the Chair of governors will provide you with a written response. This will normally be within 10 school days of acknowledging the complaint, but you will be kept informed if more time is needed. The response will provide details of how to move on to the next stage, if the complainant is not satisfied.

Stage 3 (Governing Body)

If you are not satisfied with the Chair of governor's response at the end of stage 2, the complaint can be referred to the governing body by writing to the Chair or clerk to the governing body. The governing body will ask a small panel (3 – 5) of governors to investigate your complaint. This will normally be arranged within fifteen school days of your complaint being received, depending on the availability of all concerned. You may be invited to speak to the panel at a meeting and be accompanied by a friend or representative. After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing. This will normally be within 10 school days of the meeting.

The decision of the governors is the last step in the procedure.

Please see Appendix 2 for procedural guidance on Complaints Panels

Options for complainant

This is the end of the school's complaints process. If the complainant is not satisfied they can contact the Secretary of State or Ofsted.

The Secretary of State has the power to consider complaints that the governing body has acted unreasonably in the discharge of any of its statutory duties.

The Chief Inspector (Ofsted) has the power to investigate complaints about the school as a whole. (Standards of education, welfare of pupils and school management). Ofsted will not normally investigate cases to do with individual pupils.

Parents may seek advice from the Department for Education at www.dfes.gov.uk or from the Advisory Centre for Education at www.ace-ed.org.uk.

Complaints related to the school curriculum

There is a specific procedure for complaints about the school curriculum and matters relating to it, including the provision of information and charges. In general these are dealt with in a similar way to other complaints. However, there are some specific differences –

You may complain either to the Local Authority or the Governing Body in the first instance.

The complaint will be investigated by whichever of these is responsible for the matter complained about.

The governing body will inform both the complainant and the LA of the outcome of its investigation.

There is a right of appeal to the LA, and then to the Secretary of State.

If you are in doubt whether your complaint comes into this category, or would like a copy of the full procedure for complaints relating to the school curriculum, please contact Wokingham Borough Council direct by any of the following means:

Online

Use the online live chat service or
Complete the online 'Contact us' form

Telephone: 0118 974 6000
Monday to Friday 8am - 5pm
Minicom: 0118 974 6991 (service for the deaf)

In person

Visit the Civic Offices between 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

By mail

Address: Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

In general, internal school matters are the responsibility of the school governing body. However, you may have a complaint which relates to something which is the Local Authority's responsibility.

The LA will provide advice to parents and schools on best practice procedures for dealing with complaints. The LA will, where appropriate, check to make sure that the complaint has been reasonably dealt with. Where required, LA officers may play a role in helping schools to investigate and resolve particular complaints.

School admissions and exclusions

Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Special educational needs

There is a separate appeal procedure for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Complaints against school staff

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

Other contact details

School office.....	0118 9265843
Chair of governors.....	via the school office
Clerk to the Governors.....	via the school office

Appendix 1

Procedural guidance for school staff regarding formal complaints:

Monitoring complaints

At all formal stages of the complaints procedure, the following information should be recorded:

- The name of the complainant;
- The date and time at which complaint was made;
- The details of the complaint;
- The desired outcome of the complainant;
- How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held);
- Results and conclusions of investigations;
- Any action taken;
- The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint).

Records should be retained within school for 6 years from the date of resolution and can then be destroyed.

Upholding or not upholding complaints

At each stage of the complaints procedure, the conclusion will be either:

1 That the complaint is upheld (in part or in full) and, where appropriate, some form of action is taken.

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 complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Or

2 That the complaint is not upheld and reasons for this are clearly given.

The complainant may either choose to take no further action or will be advised of how to take the complaint to the next relevant stage of the complaints policy.

Appendix 2

Guidance and procedure for Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body Complaints Panel

Introduction

If the complainant remains unsatisfied following an investigation by the Chair of Governors they can ask for their complaint to be referred to a governor complaints panel.

The complaints panel will be clerked by a member of the school staff, the clerk to the governing body or another governor.

The Committee

The panel will generally consist of three governors who have not previously been involved with dealing with the complaint. The panel should elect its own chair.

If required, WBC will offer support and guidance to the clerk, the Chair of governors and/or the members of the complaints panel on procedural issues but will not play any part in reviewing the details of the complaint itself which is the responsibility alone of the complaints panel.

Acknowledgement and time scales

The Chair of Governors should acknowledge receipt of the complainant's letter within 3 school days. This letter will inform them that their complaint will be heard by a complaints panel within 15 school days.

Governor Complaints Panel Arrangements

The Chair of Governors will contact the clerk and ask them to begin making preparatory arrangements.

The clerk should then formally write to the complainant, the headteacher and any other relevant staff or witnesses and inform them:

- Of the date, time and venue of the hearing;
- How it will be conducted;
- Request for any supporting documentation by either the complainant or the school which must be returned to the Clerk no later than 5 school days before the hearing takes place; this should include any request from supporting witnesses or representatives to attend with either party.
- Of the rights of accompaniment as outlined in this document.

The clerk will ensure that all parties receive all relevant documents at least 3 school days before the date of the hearing so as to allow individuals to familiarise themselves with them.

Governors Complaints Panel Meeting

The Chair should allow each party involved to explain their understanding or interpretation of events and for the Panel to question them for further clarification. Complainants do not have to attend the Panel meeting if they would prefer not to, and all written evidence will be considered.

Ultimately, the chair of the meeting has control over its proceedings.

After the Panel meeting

- The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and:
 - Reach a majority decision, on the complaint;
- Decide or recommend upon the appropriate action (if any) to be taken;
- Where appropriate, suggest changes to, or request a review of, the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

This information will be included in letters to both the headteacher and the complainant.