

Learning Together for Life

Jesus said, 'Love one another as I have loved you' John 15:12, New Testament

Stepney Greencoat

Church of England

Primary School



School Complaints Policy

Policy Reviewed/Approved	By Committee, Individual Governor or Head teacher
Policy Renewal Date	SPRING 2023

INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the way in which this school will deal with complaints.

It is in the interest of everyone that all parties involved in any complaint conduct themselves in a professional, courteous and respectful manner at all times. Complaints should be dealt with promptly, at all stages. The school aims to resolve all complaints satisfactorily at the earliest stage.

The school recognises that it is essential to give time to complainants and to be patient, so that they feel that they have been heard properly. It is important that parents are reassured that there are established procedures and, if appropriate, that their case will be impartially investigated. Parents can be reassured that their decision to make a complaint will not be held against them or their child.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is an expression of significant dissatisfaction, written or oral, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school about any aspect of their child's education, this includes the practices or policies of the school, the conduct, action or omissions of members of staff employed at the school or about the quality of teaching.

Complaints may be written or oral. It is not always appropriate to ask for complaints to be put in writing as this might unnecessarily formalise the situation, resulting in either party taking a more defensive or entrenched position and making the conflict more difficult to resolve.

For a complaint to merit serious consideration, it should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- It is made by the person(s) directly affected by the matter of the complaint
- it relates to recent events
- the events in question can be dated
- there is independent corroboration of the allegations

It is important to bear in mind that not all expressions of concerns constitute a complaint. Discretion needs to be applied in determining whether action over and above the normal day to day discussions on parental concerns is needed. All senior leadership team members are expected to exercise such discretion before referring matters to the Head teacher.

Problems and expressions of concern should be dealt with as far as is possible, at the point of first contact. This is usually the class teacher or member of the leadership team. If it cannot be resolved at this, then the teacher should refer the matter upwards.

STAGES IN THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

GENERAL GUIDANCE

It is normal for each stage in the complaints procedure to be completed before moving to the next stage. In very exceptional circumstances the head teacher, usually in consultation with the Chair of the Governing Body, may decide to omit a stage.

The head teacher, or member of staff investigating a complaint should always be aware of the fact that a concern or complaint may escalate into a larger issue and be referred to the complaints committee of the governing body. It is therefore essential that clear, concise written notes of discussions and incidents are made and kept for every stage of the procedure.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL

When a complaint is made, the school will make every effort to resolve the matter as informally and appropriately as possible. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the option to move from an informal to a formal procedure.

Most concerns can be resolved by the class teacher or other designated member of staff by:

- Responding to the parent courteously
- Handling the complaint seriously
- Taking action quickly

In the case of an oral complaint to the head teacher, an assurance should be given that the matter will be investigated and a response given within 10 school days. At the end of the discussion, it should be clear to the complainant what action, if any, will be taken, the timescale within which it will take place and how s/he will be notified of any outcome. Every effort should be made to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the parent.

If it becomes clear that the parent is not happy with the response to the complaint, or the member of staff would like the protection of a formal procedure, the parent should be advised that the complaint should be put in writing on a complaint form. (appendix 2).

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AT THE INFORMAL STAGE

- The matter is resolved.
- The complaint has been found by the Head teacher to be valid and that the Head teacher; within her responsibility for the overall internal management of the school will take appropriate action.

If it becomes clear that the parent is not happy with the response to the complaint, or the member of staff or head teacher would like the protection of the formal procedure, the parent should be advised to put their complaint in writing for investigation by the head teacher, (stage 2 formal) or investigation by the Chair if the complaint concerns the head teacher, (stage 3). The complainant has 10 school days to request to move from the informal to formal stage.

STAGE 2: FORMAL

If a complaint is received by the head teacher, the following procedures should be followed

- a) The complaint is acknowledged within two school days and the complainant is told that the matter will be investigated

- b) The head teacher and staff keep notes of any discussions held with the complainant
- c) Where the head teacher, or designated member of staff, undertakes an investigation, it is important that clear written statements are taken and that every statement is signed and dated
- d) A response will be given usually within 10 school days

If the Chair of the governing board, or another governor, receives a complaint from a parent, they should consult with the head teacher before taking any action. If another governor receives a complaint from a parent, it should be referred to the head teacher or the chair of governors, if the complaint concerns the head teacher. It is important to ensure that the informal stages of the procedure have all been fully explored. If the informal procedure has been exhausted the parent should be advised to follow the formal procedure and complete a complaints form. If the complaint is against the head teacher and not in relation to any previous informal handling of the complaint, the chair of governors normally investigates the matter through the informal procedures above and if the complaint is unresolved at this stage the formal stage should be invoked.

If the Chair has been party to information which compromises their position the investigation may be handled by the vice-chair or another designated governor.

Investigation Process

- a) There should be a clear understanding of the complaint and clarity should be sought if necessary
- b) Interviews should be held as soon as possible after the incident
- c) Strict attention will be paid to confidentiality
- d) Separate discussions may be held with all parties involved and any witnesses
- e) Written notes will be taken of all discussions
- f) The complainants desired outcomes will be discussed
- g) Where appropriate, written statements will be obtained and signed and dated
- h) If pupils are interviewed, parental consent will be sought
- i) Efforts will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant
- j) The complainant and member of staff will be given an opportunity to provide documentation and identify potential witnesses

This process is based on guidance provided in the LDBS document, "Parental Complaints".

After completing the investigation, the head teacher, (or Chair, in the case of a complaint against the head teacher) prepares a written summary of the findings, and writes to the complainant. If the complainant is not happy with this response, s/he may write to the Clerk to the Governing Body at the school address requesting that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Committee of the Governing Board. This request must be received within 10 school days from receipt of the school's findings.

STAGE 3: FORMAL

If a parent writes to the clerk of governors requesting that the complaint move to formal stage 3, the Governing Board will arrange for the complaint to be heard by a panel of three Governors who have not had involvement with the matter at an earlier stage. This panel will be set up at a properly convened meeting of the full Governing Body. The panel will, where possible, reflect a cross section of Governors who have no direct interest or involvement in the case.

If the Complaints Committee of the Governing Board is to consider the complaint, the Clerk to the Governing Body should set up the meeting within 20 school days' giving at least 10 school days' notice of the meeting.

The hearing by the Complaints Committee should be as informal as possible. An outline of the procedures for the complaints committee can be found in the LDBS "Parental Complaints" document.

The decision and recommendations of the Complaints Panel are sent within 10 school days to all parties. The Panel's decision is final.

Further Rights of Appeal

Parents may, if they believe the Governors complaints panel has acted unreasonably, or that the governors have not followed their own procedures in considering the complaint, make a complaint to the Department of Education using an online complaints form.

Parents may also complain to Ofsted, but Ofsted will not normally investigate complaints concerning individual pupils, but if there are any child protection concerns they pass these on to social services, or the police and this may trigger an inspection.

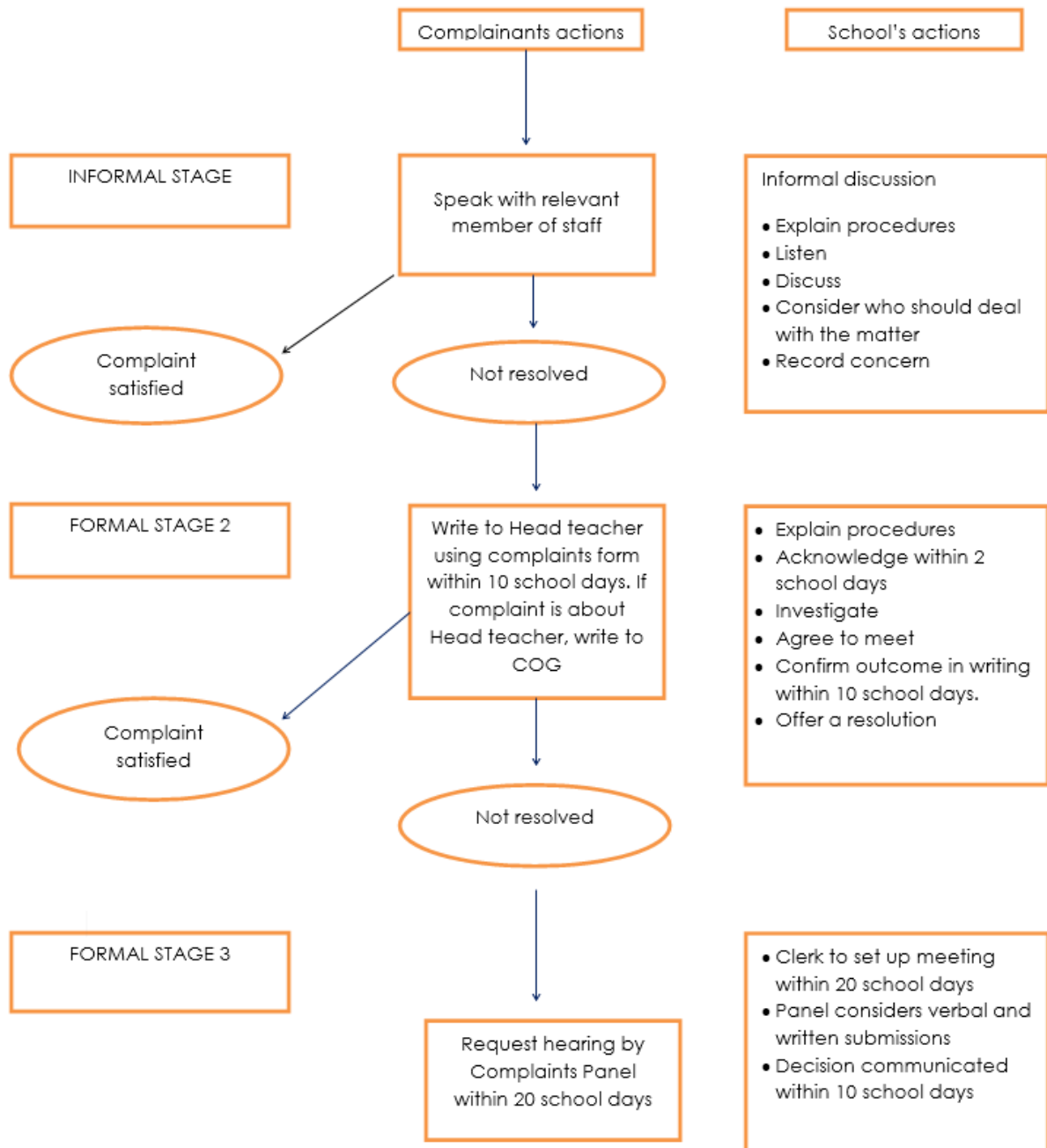
SUMMARY OF TIMESCALES

Stage	Description	Response
Informal stage	Discussions with relevant member of staff and/or head teacher	As soon as possible but no later than 10 school days
Move from informal to formal stage	Complainant has 10 school days to request to move from the informal to formal stage	Written complaint to Head teacher, or Chair of Governors if complaint about head teacher acknowledged within 2 school days
Formal stage 2	Written complaint to Head teacher, or Chair of Governors if complaint about head teacher	Acknowledge within 2 school days. Investigate Response normally within 10 school days

Formal stage 3	Complaints Committee Hearing	<p>Hearing set up within 20 school days with 10 school days notice of meeting.</p> <p>Agenda and papers sent out 7 school days in advance.</p> <p>Decision letter within 10 school days.</p>
----------------	------------------------------	--

The Governing Board should be informed at their next meeting that a complaint has been received and dealt with. Details should not be divulged to the full Governing Board or to any other party not directly Involved, as to do so would violate confidentiality.

Summary Complaints Procedure



Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Stepney Greencoat is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Stepney Greencoat defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated

correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the head teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the head teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Stepney Greencoat.

Appendix 2

COMPLAINTS FORM	
Name of School	
When we receive a written complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within 2 school days and send a full or interim response within 5 school days	
Name of complainant:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone (day)	Telephone (evening)
What is your concern and how has it affected you?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list below:	

Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?

What would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?

Signature:

Date:

Please return this form to _____

Insert date

Dear

Confirmation of letter received

I am writing to confirm receipt of your letter, dated (insert date), which has been opened today. The school will endeavour to respond to you within 10 school days from today (insert date)

Kind regards,

Mrs Deborah Boyle
Senior Office Manager