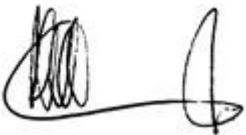


## Complaints Policy & Procedures

**STATUTORY**

**3**

**POLICY**

| Head Teacher  | Chair of Governors  | Review Dates           |
|---------------|---|------------------------|
|               |  | Last Review: July 2021 |
| Lisa Keighley | Philip Cavalier-Lumley  | Next Review: July 2024 |

### Policy Statement

We believe this school provides an excellent education and the Headteacher and support staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents and others. We are obliged under the School Standards and Framework Act to have in place clear procedures to deal with complaints made against the school or individuals connected with it and this policy complies with section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

### Introduction

Views are welcomed. In the spirit of true partnership between home, school and the community, everyone is encouraged to say what they think should go on within the school. Schools aim for high standards but sometimes things can go wrong or expectations are not met.

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet which may be about an event that has happened, failed to happen or the way in which something was handled.

The vast majority of concerns can be resolved informally. It is in everyone's best interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. This can usually be achieved through discussion and good communication. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome, a formal procedure (as outlined in this policy) would then need to be followed when attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful.

The procedure described does not include complaints covered by a separate statutory procedure, for example: complaints about the National Curriculum; school admission decisions; statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND); school re-organisation procedures; matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation; pupil exclusions decisions; whistleblowing; staff grievances and procedures; complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.

All schools have their own policies that have been agreed by their governing body. These should be checked to ensure the correct policy is relevant to your concern before proceeding with a complaint.

For complaints to be investigated fully, full and relevant information must be disclosed and not made anonymously.

## **Aim**

*To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.*

## **What to expect?**

- There are set response times for each stage of the complaints procedure.
- A complaint register is maintained for formal complaints (see below).
- Conversations and correspondence will be handled with discretion, but parents need to be aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the complaint procedure.
- Raising a concern or making a complaint will not affect the relationship between the school, parents or a child.
- When investigating a complaint the school will talk to the child, witnesses and others involved quickly.
- The school and the governors have a duty to act properly and investigate complaints impartially. Once investigations are complete the person making the complaint will receive a written response from the school within 20 (twenty) school days.

## **Advice**

Many concerns can be resolved quickly with goodwill, often by making early contact with the class teacher.

Remember, the more information that is available the better able you will be to discuss the matter. Find out by asking the school for information. Obtain copies of relevant policies from the school e.g. Behaviour Policy (including Anti-bullying and Exclusion), SEND policy, Health and Safety Policy etc.

- Seek further information by visiting the school website or seek support from independent bodies such as Citizens Advice (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>), community relations centres and Advisory Centre for Education (<http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/>) etc.

The school is busy so please make an appointment for discussion through the school office. It helps to outline the purpose and how long you think you may need with the staff member/head teacher. Cover all the relevant points, but be as brief as you can. Avoid writing long letters or emails. Make it easy to read by using bullet points or headings. Include dates, times, names etc. and explain clearly what your complaint is, what effect the issue is having on your child or you and what you would like to see happen. Keep it factual and avoid

making judgements or hearsay. If more information is needed from you the person investigating your complaint will contact you.

Sometimes it helps to take a friend with you. You may forget something if you are doing all the talking, they can do the listening for you and record main points and agreed action. See Representatives below.

Try to keep calm! Avoid confrontation – it will cloud the issue. And remember to ask “what happens next?”

### **Complaint Procedure against a member of staff/Headteacher/School Governor**

- The complaint procedure is distinct from any formal disciplinary proceedings for staff or the Head Teacher. If a complaint did result in a disciplinary procedure, then the complaint would be put on hold and you will be advised of the delay and updated every three weeks.
- If a complaint is made against a member of staff, Head Teacher or a Governor, they will be informed and have the opportunity to respond.

The governing body will form a Complaints Panel as described below:

- Parents, carers or pupils who wish to pursue a complaint regarding a school issue can refer the complaint to a review committee of governors, known as a Complaints Panel. This is formed from at least three people who have had no prior involvement with the complaint.
- A majority of the committee must be governors, at least one member must be a parent of a pupil at the school, and in addition a person must be selected from a panel of non-governors of the school.
- The Headteacher will not be a member of the panel.
- Governors are mindful of equality issues when looking at the composition of a Complaints Panel.
- The governors review hearing is the last school based stage of the complaint process.

**Please Note: If there is a complaint regarding a School Governor or Chair of Governors, the complaint must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body.**

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1. Informal**

Your expression of concern should be made to the school at the earliest opportunity.

First talk to the teacher most closely concerned to clarify the facts and resolve through discussion. A request for discussion with the Headteacher or senior staff member may also be desirable before making a formal complaint.

#### **Stage 2: Complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, you may wish to make a formal complaint. This should be done in writing to the Headteacher. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 3 (three) school days.

The investigation will be carried out and the outcome communicated to you within 20 (twenty) school days. The written response will include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it (if additional time is required to formulate a response this will be explained to you). Where appropriate, the response will include what action the school will take to resolve it.

The head teacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another member of staff but not the decision on the action to be taken.

Once a decision has been reached, the head teacher will ensure that the parent is clear about the action taken and what to do if you remain dissatisfied (see below).

When the head teacher receives a written complaint, they may decide to refer the matter immediately to a governing body complaint panel.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, the matter should be referred to the Chair of Governors of the school.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor, the matter should be referred to the Clerk of the Governing body.

### **Stage 3: Governing body**

Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should the parent need to, a formal complaint must be written to the chair of governors within 10 (ten) school days of the decision from the school. This needs to be sent in a sealed envelope via the school office: 'For the Attention of the Chair of Governors'.

This letter to the chair of governors needs to set out details of the complaint including why you remain dissatisfied and what outcomes you are seeking. The chair will then set up a panel of governors to consider the complaint.

The governing body Complaints Panel will normally consist of three people, none of whom should have been previously involved in the complaint. They will let the complainant know when the complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with the complainant and any others involved is considered appropriate, the complainant will be given 7 (seven) days' notice. The Complaints Panel will make a decision in private and write to the complainant with their findings and any recommendations within 7 (seven) school days.

### **Stage 4: Final complaint stage**

If all attempts to resolve the complaint have been unsuccessful, for most schools the complainant may refer the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education (DfE), Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT. For more information, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.

## **Appendices**

- A. General School Complaints flow chart
- B. Complaint against the Head Teacher flow chart

### **Right to Representation**

At each stage of the above procedure a parent has the right to be a family member, work colleague or a friend. If the parent's representative is unable to attend a meet on the date proposed, an alternative time and date can be agreed so long as it is reasonable and does not unduly delay the procedure.

### **Records**

Blakehill will log all complaints received by the school and keep a record of all complaints, including all letters sent to or by the Head of school in relation to complaints, relevant allegations, minutes of meetings and appeal hearings. These records will be maintained in accordance with the school's obligations in terms of data protection and Equality Act 2010 requirements.

### **Distribution**

This policy will be available to school employees and parents via:

- Referenced in the School Handbook
- Website
- The Intranet
- Hard copy via the School Office

### **Contacts**

For support and guidance on the practical application of this policy and procedure, please contact the School Office.

Parents of pupils with SEND who have any questions or concerns regarding their child contact Mrs Pinder, Mrs Gould (SEND Leaders).

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy is effective immediately and will be reviewed every 3 (three) years.

A continuous process of self-evaluation by the governors will monitor the process of dealing with complaints.