

Current Policy Date: March 2016

Review: Annually

Date of Next Review: March 2019



Source: *West Berkshire Model School Complaints Policy (revised January 2012)*

COMPLAINTS POLICY

This document sets out the policy for dealing with comments, grievances and complaints. This policy should read in conjunction with the School's Complaints procedure.

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school
- Complaints about the school's operational arrangements

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should relate to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months.

This policy should not be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment
- Complaints about the actions of a governor
- Complaints about the actions of another parent
- Allegations of abuse
- Issues between the school and community groups/Friends of the School

These matters will be dealt with by:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment (There is a separate staff grievance procedure)
- Complaints about the actions of a governor (This should be reported to Chairman of the Governing Body in the first instance, **and considered with reference to the West Berkshire Governors Code of Conduct**)
- Complaints about the actions of another parent (This should be reported to the Headteacher who will investigate whether action can be taken by the school)
- Allegations of abuse (Any allegations of abuse should be discussed with the Headteacher or a senior staff member in the first instance. **For a definition of abuse, refer to the school's Child Protection/ Safeguarding policy(s).**)
- Issues between the school and community groups/Friends of the School (These will be resolved informally by discussion)

Status

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states the need to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services the school provides. The law also requires the complaints procedure to be publicised.

Purpose

The Schools and Children's Centres values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders. The governing body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self-evaluation and raising standards. All stakeholders should feel that their concerns or complaints can be voiced and will be considered seriously.

The School and Children's Centre takes informal concerns seriously and aims to resolve them at the earliest stage in order to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure will not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. Staff will endeavour to resolve issues on the spot.

Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Applicability

The policy shall apply to all employees and governors of the School and Children's Centre. It is the shared responsibility of the headteacher and the Chairman of the Governing Body to ensure that these groups are made aware of the policy and procedure.

The Complaints Procedure 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 panel *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 and Children's Centres senior management team so that services can be improved.

Roles and responsibilities

This section of the policy is taken from the separate document: School Complaints Procedure, which explains the process in more detail.

In brief the procedure is as follows:

Stage one:

Complaint/concern heard by staff member (informal);

Stage two:

- Complaint heard by headteacher (formal) or
- Complaint is heard by the Chair of Governing Body (if complaint is about the headteacher) (formal);

Stage three:

Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Panel (review);

A dissatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure are publicised to all stakeholders through:

- the school brochure;
- the information given to new parents when their children join the school;
- the Schools and Children's Centre website

If, at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with the School's and Children's Centre's legal representatives.

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

All documentation regarding complaints (including notes of any related meetings and telephone calls), the action taken and the final outcome will be recorded and a summary included in the Headteacher's next report to governors.

The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals.

The monitoring and review of complaints by the School and Children's Centre and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating the School's and Children's Centre's performance, and will contribute to school improvement. Any underlying issues identified will be addressed.

Record Keeping

- All complaints will be responded to in writing.
- At Stage 1 – even though this is an informal stage, the complainant will receive a reply in writing and a copy should be retained for reference.
- At Stages 2a, 2b and 3 – there should be clear communication in writing throughout the handling of the complaint. A copy of all written communication should be retained for reference.

Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific child would be kept within the child's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of 7 years.