

# Waltham-on-the-Wolds Church of England Primary School

## Concerns/Complaints Policy



### Introduction

**1.1** We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the head teacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are concerns or complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

**1.2** If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

**1.3** The school has agreed to adopt Leicestershire County Council's model policy regarding the process for making a complaint; please see Annex A.

### 2 Aims and objectives

**2.1** Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concern or complaint. We give careful consideration to all concerns/complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to address any concern and resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the *interests of the child* above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any concern or complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

**2.2** It is important that everyone is clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

**2.3** These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

## Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to 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.

### 3 The complaints process we encourage

**3.1** If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

**3.2** Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the head teacher. The head teacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

**3.3** If the parent still feels that their complaint has not been resolved or should a parent have a complaint about the head teacher, s/he should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the governing body, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

**3.4** Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors. (A proforma is available at the end of this document to assist with this: Annex B.)

**3.5** The governing body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It arranges a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invites the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

**3.6** After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

**3.7** If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT). Further information about this process is available from the school. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

**3.8** If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

#### **4 Monitoring and review**

**4.1** The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

## **School Complaints Procedure**

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To this end all staff and governors are aware of the procedure to be followed if a complaint is raised. Also, whilst not wishing to encourage complaints, complainants should note that they have a duty to raise a matter as soon as conveniently possible. It can then be investigated more effectively whilst information is fresh in the minds of all parties.

The school operates a 4 stage complaints procedure. If the complaint concerns the conduct of the headteacher it will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 3.

### ***Stage 1: Complaint heard by staff member***

In the first instance, it is hoped that the complainant will be able to discuss the issue with the member of staff concerned.

The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing the complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complainant should refer the complaint to the headteacher, who will refer it to another member of staff.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the complaint will be referred to another member of staff via the headteacher. The member of staff will consider the complaint objectively and impartially.

If the first approach is made to a governor, they will refer the issue and the complainant to the appropriate person and advise the complainant of the procedure. Governors will not act unilaterally outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the process.

### ***Stage 2: Complaint heard by the headteacher***

The complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1, and/or wish to pursue their initial complaint. If so, the complainant should submit the complaint in writing, to the headteacher, within 10 school days of Stage 1 being concluded. A copy of the complaint form is attached to this procedure.

The headteacher may delegate the task of collating information concerning the complaint to another staff member, but not the decision, nor the action to be taken. The headteacher will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue. Subsequent to this meeting the headteacher will write to the complainant summarising the outcome reached and the process for appeal.

### ***Stage 3: Complaint heard by the chair of governors***

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2 the complainant may take their complaint to the chair of governors.

The complainant will need to write to the chair of governors, care of the school, within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 2. The complainant should provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the headteacher's letter concluding Stage 2 and give details in writing of why they are not satisfied with the outcome.

The chair will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue, having met with the headteacher. The chair will write to the complainant at the conclusion of his/her investigation with the outcome reached and the process for appeal. The complaint will move on to Stage 4 if the complainant remains dissatisfied by the outcome.

### ***Stage 4: Complaint heard by the governing body Complaints Appeal Panel***

The complainant needs to write to the chair of governors within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 3, notifying that they wish their complaint to be heard by the complaints appeal panel. The chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a governing body complaints appeal panel.

The governors' appeal panel hearing is the last school based stage of the complaints process and is not convened to merely rubber stamp previous decisions. Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body will nominate 3 governors to have delegated powers to hear the complaint at this stage. These governors must have no previous knowledge of the complaint. The panel will choose their own chair.

The remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel is to:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The complainant will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within 5 days. The letter will confirm the end of the school's and governing body's involvement with the complaint and explain any further rights of appeal. The complainant should be advised that the local authority has no role unless the complaint relates to a service provided by the local authority.

## Complaint Form for Waltham CE Primary School Annex B

Complainant's Name:	
Pupil's Name:	
Complainant's Relationship to pupil:	
Address of Complainant:	
Post Code:	Daytime Tel:
Mobile:	E-mail:
<b>Please give details of your complaint:</b>	

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to, when and what was the response?):**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**



**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Official Use:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**