



Compliments, comments, concerns and complaints

Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that all staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. We always welcome your feedback as compliments and positive comments inspire and motivate us and any issues or concerns raised give us an opportunity to improve things. Your feedback is welcome in any form: a conversation, a letter, an email or via the formal avenues such as parent questionnaires.

Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a ‘complaint’. However there is a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this document.

1. In the first instance

If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child’s class teacher immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class teacher they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class teacher. They will always be taken seriously and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.

2. Our promise

We promise we will always be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for them.

3. The complaints process

Stage 1. (Informal) Informal expression of concern made to the school. By telephone, in person, by letter or by email.	In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child’s class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. 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.
Stage 2. (informal) Informal expression of concern made to the Headteacher. By telephone, in person, by letter or by email.	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. The headteacher will consider all concerns very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most matters of concern are normally resolved at this stage
Stage 3. Head Teacher (Formal) Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Head Teacher by letter or email.	Complaints at this stage should be written and received within 10 school days of the meeting with the class/headteacher. Your letter/email should be addressed to the Head teacher and marked “private and confidential”. The letter/email should say why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The head teacher will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary you will be given adequate notice to prepare.

	You will be informed of the outcome of the head teachers' investigation and decision on what further action will be taken within 10 school days.
Stage 4. Governors You may take your complaint to the school Governors within 6 months of the Head Teachers' response.	If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent may make representation to the Governors. A letter addressed to the Chair of Governors marked "private and confidential" can be left at the school office. If the Governors consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed panel. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A decision will be provided within 15 days where possible
Stage 5. Further representation. If you remain dissatisfied you may make further representations.	Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service or the Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

4. The Complaints Committee

Membership of the Complaints Committee should include three or five governors. Members should be independent and impartial; the Headteacher should not be a member. No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.

The aim of the investigation will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. An effective panel will acknowledge that the complainant may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcome as possible. The complainant must be given the opportunity to make representation and the school the right of reply. After hearing all the evidence, the Governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. If the investigation upholds the complaint 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.

An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of guilt. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the governors do not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his/her complaint has been taken seriously.

5. Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, our Complaints Procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the CofG, is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

6. Monitoring and review

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

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.