



Springfield
Infant School

Springfield Infant School and Nursery

General Complaints Procedures Policy 2017

Vision Statement

‘Space to grow and wings to fly’

Springfield is a Rights Respecting School.

Article 3- The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

Article 28 – Every child has the right to an education.

Introduction: The Principles

The Staged Approach:

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints **informally at school level**, in partnership with parents. The formal stages should only be triggered in **exceptional** circumstances:

- Stage 1 is the **informal stage**. In the case of a complaint by a parent, the class teacher will receive the first approach and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the school office should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint.
- Stages 2,3 and 4 are **formal stages** involving the headteacher and governing body.

This policy is designed to manage all complaints. Complaints vary in their nature and complexity. Therefore, we will consider at which stage a complaint should be dealt with when it is initially raised and which member of staff is best placed to deal with it. A dissatisfied complainant must always be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

The timescales set out are guidelines only, the GB can set their own timescales but these must be reasonable and must be adhered to unless there is good reason not to do so.

Our principle aim is to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice

Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

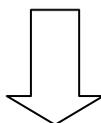
- Be publicised in the School Prospectus
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be focused on outcomes
- Have established time limits for action
- Keep people informed at all stages
- Where necessary, respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated

General Complaints Procedure

An Overview

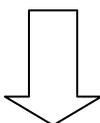
Stage One

Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher



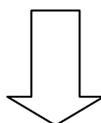
Stage Two

Discuss concerns formally with the Headteacher or senior member of staff



Stage Three

Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors



Stage Four

Complaint heard by a Governing Body's complaints panel

Guidance on the Staged Approach to Managing General Complaints

There are four stages to this procedure:

- Stage 1 is **informal**
- Stages 2,3 and 4 are **formal**

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

- ◆ Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.
- ◆ If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.
- ◆ The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- ◆ A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Headteacher/Senior Teacher should monitor these records.
- ◆ If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the headteacher or a senior member of staff should be contacted.
- ◆ Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. It would be useful if governors did not act unilaterally on an individual complaint 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 procedure

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.

- ◆ More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the headteacher or a senior member of staff. He/She will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.
- ◆ A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.
- ◆ The Headteacher or Senior Teacher should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing.
- ◆ If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, **details should remain confidential to the headteacher**. However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, or the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further.

Stage Three: Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors or another nominated governor

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the head teacher or the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered at Stage 3.

Once the complaint has been received, the Chair of Governors (or another governor nominated by the Chair of Governors) will gain clarity over the complaint and gain any supplementary information which may lead to resolution at this stage.

The Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) should meet with the complainant and/or subject of the complaint, if appropriate.

The Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) should meet, as appropriate, with any witnesses and take a note of any comments made by those involved.

Notes will be kept of all meetings, conversations and of the receipt of any documentation.

After establishing all the relevant facts, a written response will be recorded and sent to the complainant. The Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) may meet with the complainant to discuss their findings as he/she decides is appropriate.

The written record and response will include a full explanation of the decision reached and the reasons for this.

The Stage 3 processes will take place within a reasonable time, and usual practice is that this may take up to 10 school days, however, every complaint is different and this may not always be possible. The Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) will keep the complainant informed in writing of the on-going time scale.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 investigation the complainant should write to the Chair or Clerk of the Governing Body and marked 'Private and Confidential' to request that their complaint is considered by a Complaints Appeal Panel. The complaints appeal panel will be formed of governors from the school's governing body.

Stage Four: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors who will then convene a Complaints Panel.

- ◆ Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and **all previous stages have been exhausted.**
- ◆ In line with good practice a Clerk will be appointed to the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel at the start of Stage 4 to support the process and be the point of contact for the complainant. It would be good practice to notify the headteacher of the complaint at this stage if they have not previously been involved in the process.
- ◆ Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the clerk to the governing body within 5 school days.
- ◆ It is essential that this process is fair and objective. **To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint at this stage.** Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- ◆ It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. However, the governing body will usually convene a small panel of 3 or 5 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- ◆ The chair of the panel should notify the headteacher and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the headteacher is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- ◆ The complainant has a right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/representative.

The friend/representative may:

- Confer with the complainant during the meeting;
- Ask questions of witnesses;
- Sum up the complainants complaint if requested by them.

The friend or representative may not:

- Answer questions on the complainants behalf;
 - Address the Panel if the complainant does not wish it;
 - Prevent the complainant from summarising the complaint.
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- ◆ If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the headteacher has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
 - ◆ The headteacher and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days.
 - ◆ This is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure

There is no right of appeal against the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel decision. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and believes the Panel has acted unreasonably in response to the complaint, the complainant should be advised to write to The School Complaints Unit