



Willow Fields Primary School Complaints Policy

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

Willow Fields Primary school is committed to providing a safe, stimulating, consistent and accessible service to children and their parents/carers. We always aim to provide high quality services for everyone, but accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know so that we can put them right and learn from any mistakes.

Most parents have positive relations with school but on occasions, things may go wrong. The guidance in this document aims to make sure that the interests of pupils, parents and school staff are taken into account when dealing with complaints.

Whether you are a parent or a member of the public the place to start is the school. It is much better if matters can be sorted within school, even if this might feel awkward in the beginning.

There is usually more than one side to any dispute or misunderstanding and it is important that all the facts are known - so that the best solution can be found.

In the majority of cases, the Headteacher and/or Governing Body are responsible for investigating complaints about school services or staff. Initial complaints regarding the School should be directed to the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher - the Chair of Governors should be contacted.

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states that the governors of the school, shall establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the School, other than those to be dealt with in accordance with any other statutory provision.

This procedure does not cover concerns about any of the following, for which there are separate arrangements laid down by law:

- The School curriculum, collective worship and religious education and the provision of information required by law;
- Matters relating to the exclusion of pupils from school where there are separate arrangements in place;
- School admissions;
- Home to school transport;
- Statements and provision of Special Educational Needs.

Timescales

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below. For the purposes of this policy a working day is defined as a weekday during term time when the school is open and excludes weekends and bank holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School website.

It is essential that complaints follow the procedure determined below for them to be considered in a fair and open manner. Unless the procedure is followed, the Headteacher [in the first instance] and Governors may not consider the complaint.

Stage One - Initial Contact with the School

If a parent/carer has a complaint about some aspect of an activity or about the conduct of a member of staff, it will often be possible to resolve the problem by simply speaking with the individual concerned. As a school, we are committed to open and regular dialogue and we welcome all comments on its services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

In the first instance, parents/carers are encouraged to speak to the relevant member of staff, if deemed appropriate. If not, the Headteacher should be approached, and she will try to resolve the problem.

We may request that you make an appointment, as this will ensure we can listen to your concerns fully and allocate an appropriate amount of time.



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If the complaint centres on a pupil, the school will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question. The school will normally talk to pupils with another adult present.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures.

Stage Two - Formal Consideration of your Complaint

If informal discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher¹. Relevant names, dates, evidence and other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included. As part of the consideration of your complaint, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help explain the reasons for your complaint. The Headteacher will keep written and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations and other related documentation.

If the Headteacher has good reason to believe that the situation has child protection implications, the Headteacher will inform the designated Child Protection Officer and ensure the local Children's Services department is contacted, according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy. If any party involved in the complaint has reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, then they should contact the Police.

The Headteacher will arrange a time to meet the parents/carer concerned and any other relevant individuals, such as members of staff, to discuss the complaint and any response to it.

Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing normally within five working days of receipt during term time and soon as practical during the holidays. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

The aim of the school is to inform any complainant of the outcome of any investigation and the resolution to the complainant within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. However, this may not be possible if there are safeguarding issues involved. Please note any complaint received during school holidays, or within one month of the end of term, is likely to take longer to resolve.

Stage Three – Consideration by the Governing Body

If your concern has already been through Stages One and Two and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Complaints Committee of the Governing Body.

You should contact the School Chair of Governors by letter enclosing a copy of the written complaint originally submitted, indicating which matters remain unresolved. No new complaint may be included. Written correspondence should be sent to the Chair of Governors care of the School.

You should write to the Chair of Governor's within five working days of receiving the decision in Stage Two. Your letter will normally be acknowledged within five working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescale.

The Chair of Governors has discretion to carry out an investigation of the complaint or agree to refer the matter to the Complaints Committee if they feel it would be helpful in resolving the complaint².

The aim of the Complaints Committee is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the School and the parent(s)/carers. However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations, which will reassure you that your complaint has been taken seriously.

Should the Governing Body agree to hold a Complaints Committee meeting, you will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting by letter from the Clerk to the Committee. Every effort will be made to enable the Complaints Committee meeting to take place within ten working days of the decision to hold the meeting. The letter will explain what will happen at the meeting and inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With agreement of the Chair of the

¹ Where the complaint or problem directly relates to the Headteacher then correspondence should be sent to the Chair of Governors who will investigate under stage 2 of this procedure.

² Where the chair of Governors has previously investigated the complaint at an earlier stage then the matter will be referred to the complaints committee.



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Committee, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend their meeting.

The format of such a meeting would be for you to attend to present your case and allow the governing body to take evidence. A separate meeting will then take place to allow the school staff to do the same. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meetings by any of the participants.

The Clerk will send you and the Headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the committee within ten working days during term time and as soon as practical during the holidays. The Chair of Governors will inform you if this timescale will need to increase.

If the School or Local Authority receives an anonymous complaint, the details will be passed to the school and it generally will not be investigated. N.B. This will not apply in relation to issues connected to child protection.

Stage Four - Complaint to the Secretary of State or Ofsted

If you are not happy with the outcome and you wish to pursue your complaint further, you can write to the Secretary of State, at the address below, including all correspondence from your complaint investigation so far. We would advise that, unless the school is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken. This is because the Governing Body are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Ofsted

As well as inspecting schools and monitoring how they perform, Ofsted also consider complaints if they affect the School as a whole. For example:

- The School is not providing a good enough education;
- The pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or different needs are not being met;
- The School is not well led and managed, or is wasting money;
- The pupils personal development and well-being are being neglected.

You can contact Ofsted by calling their helpdesk from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday on 08456 404045 or by email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Staff on the helpdesk will discuss your concerns with you and advise you whether or not to put your complaint in writing to them. To make a formal complaint you can write to:

Enquiries
National Business Unit
Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA