



Longwell Green Primary School

Complaints Policy

Policy Date: September 2012

Responsibility: Headteacher

Reviewed: June 2015

2nd review: July 2017

Date for review: July 2019

Introduction

Longwell Green Primary School aims to work in partnership with parents in the best interests of the children. Any complaint will be given careful consideration and will be dealt with fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Actions Before Making Any Complaint

This complaints procedure is not intended to replace the normal informal discussions that take place between Parents, Staff and Headteachers in schools, on problems and concerns as they arise. Most issues can be resolved through this dialogue.

These concerns might include such matters as your child's work or progress, relations with staff, relations with other pupils including bullying, or your child's personal welfare.

The first point of contact regarding concerns should always be the class teacher. Appointments to see the class teacher are available both before and after school and may be made via the office. Please bear in mind though that teachers require time immediately before school to prepare for the day, and may have involvement with clubs or staff meetings after school, so may not always be available at short notice.

When meeting with the class teacher to raise your concerns, please be patient, the class teacher may need time to perform an investigation or put corrective measures in place and then determine their effectiveness. This informal stage may require several meetings to reach a conclusion satisfactory to all parties. Discuss desired actions for the school and parent, timescales, and further meetings during your appointment.

If a parent feels that a concern has not been solved through discussions with the class teacher, or that it is of a sufficiently serious nature, then an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher should be made. The parent should indicate that the appointment is regarding a complaint.

Referral of Complaints

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures:

Exceptions	Who to Contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) School re-organisation proposals	Concerns should be raised direct with the local authority Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Must be reported to First Point on 01454 866000, e-mail: FirstPoint@southglos.gov.uk
Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
Whistleblowing	The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 3155, via e-mail at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to WDHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed board for whistleblowing in education
Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.

General Principles Regarding Any Complaint

The following principles will apply to any complaint

- The complaint will be handled with care and sensitivity.
- All stages of the complaints procedure will be investigatory rather than adversarial
- Confidentiality will be respected at all times
- Responses to any complaint will be prompt (timescales are detailed below)
- The Complainant will be given adequate feedback and kept informed of timescales
- The Complainant will be kept informed of the options to appeal during the process
- Any investigation will be thorough and fair
- Any investigation will address all the points at issue

Complaints should normally be raised within 3 months of any incident, although complaints made outside this time limit will be considered if there are exceptional reasons for the delay. Once a complaint is made it will be dealt with as submitted and should not be added to during the process.

If any Governor is contacted directly by a parent regarding a complaint then that Governor will refer the parent to this complaints procedure. Individual Governors cannot act unilaterally by

investigating a complaint or making any prior judgement about it. The Governor can only refer the parent to the class teacher, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors as appropriate.

If the complaint is one that may result in disciplinary or legal action against the Headteacher, or the complaint is regarding the Headteacher, then the complaint should immediately be escalated to Stage 2 via a letter to the Chair of Governors as described below.

If at any stage of a complaint it becomes apparent that the Complainant is seeking some sort of financial compensation then any investigation will be halted whilst advice is sought from the Local Authority Risk and Insurance Manager.

Children from school should only be called on as witnesses in very exceptional circumstances and, in such circumstances, should be accompanied by a parent/carer or member of staff during any meetings.

If an anonymous complaint is received, or the Complainant requests anonymity, then the Complainant will be urged to identify themselves in the interests of fairness and of dealing effectively with the complaint. However if the anonymous complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature then the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will decide whether action is appropriate. If an anonymous complaint raises child protection issues then the complaint will be referred immediately to the Local Authority.

The Complainant should not attempt to bypass steps in the complaints procedure. Escalation to the Local Authority or Secretary of State levels before the formal school procedures have been exhausted will result in the Complainant being referred back to the schools procedure by those bodies.

Stage 1 (Informal) - School Level

If a parent feels that a concern has not been solved through discussion with the class teacher, or that it is of a sufficiently serious nature, then an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher should be made. The parent should indicate that the appointment is regarding a complaint.

If the Headteacher cannot resolve the complaint at the initial meeting then the school may carry out an investigation of the complaint. It will be the Headteacher's responsibility to decide who should conduct the investigation. This may be the Headteacher or may be a member of the Senior Leadership Team, especially if there is the likelihood of a personnel issue emerging from the investigation.

The investigation will be completed within **20 school days** and a follow on meeting held with the parent to discuss the results of the investigation. Further meetings may be held as required if both parties agree that the concern may be resolved by subsequent meetings, whilst still at the informal level.

The Headteacher will make written notes of any informal complaint. The notes will include details of the complaint, how it was dealt with, by whom and the outcome. In the event of the complaint proceeding to the formal stage, these notes will be made available to the Complaints Panel.

If discussions between the Headteacher and the Complainant prove fruitless, and the issue cannot be resolved to the Complainant's satisfaction, then the Headteacher will advise the Complainant that they may make a formal complaint to the Governing Board, by putting the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors **within 20 school days**.

Stage 2 – Raise the Issue with the Chair of Governors

The issue should be outlined on the appropriate form (available from the School's website or School Office and placed in a sealed envelope marked 'To the Chair of Governors c/o of Longwell Green Primary School'.

The Chair of Governors will seek to resolve the issue informally IF this is appropriate and/or possible. If the matter cannot be resolved at this level, there will be a governing board investigation (see Stage 3).

Stage 3 (Formal) – Governing Board

When the Chair of Governors has received a formal complaint, a panel of two or three Governors will be convened to hear the complaint, and make a decision about it on behalf of the Governing Board. The Governors appointed to the panel must have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

The primary function of the Complaints Panel is to decide on the merits or otherwise of the complaint. However, the panel will also play an important role in attempting to resolve the complaint. The panel will reach a decision on whether the complaint is upheld or rejected and may call for certain action to be taken by the school or the parents.

The Complaints Panel will invite written evidence from all parties to the complaint. Any written evidence will be circulated to all parties prior to any meetings. The Complaints Panel may then meet with all parties to the complaint, formally and separately. If the Panel have sufficient evidence and decide they do not need to meet with the complainant, then they must inform the complainant of this decision. Each party may be accompanied by a friend who can speak on their behalf if necessary. All parties will be given a fair opportunity to express their point. The procedure for each meeting will be as follows

- Introductions will be performed by the Chair of the Complaints Panel
- The Complainant makes a statement of their complaint and the outcome sought
- The panel will question the Complainant
- The Complainant may make a final statement

The meetings will be minuted. Care will be taken in identifying a clerk. It may be appropriate for a member of staff such as the school secretary to act as clerk, although consideration will be given to the sensitivity of the particular complaint.

The decision reached by the panel will be notified in writing to the Complainant. It will also be reported back to the next meeting of the full governing Board. Only a brief summary to the full governing board will be provided, with no detailed or named information. This will ensure that any further actions will not be jeopardised.

Written replies to Complainants will aim to answer all the points of concern, be factually correct, avoid jargon, and tell the Complainant what to do next if they are still not satisfied. It may be appropriate for the nominated complaints governor to telephone the Complainant regarding the outcome. However this will always be followed up with a letter to make sure there is no misunderstanding.

When a formal complaint is received by the Chair Of Governors a letter of acknowledgement and a request for written evidence will be sent to the Complainant **within 5 school days**. All other parties to the complaint will receive a letter outlining the complaint and requesting written evidence. The letters will detail the Governors involved in the Complaints Panel and the nominated Chair. Any written evidence should be sent to the nominated Chair of the Complaints Panel. The panel aim to convene the complaints meetings within **20 school days** of the complaint being received, at mutually acceptable times.

N.B - Where it is not possible to respond to a complaint within the stated timescales, the Complainant will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay and given an anticipated response date.

The Panel will need to take evidence from all parties, come to a conclusion and report back to the Full Governing Board on their decision before responding to the complainant. This process is likely to take 4-6 weeks in practice to arrange with all concerned.

Appeal to the Secretary Of State

A complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education if a person believes that a Governing Board or Local Authority is acting “unreasonably”, or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly. However, intervention can only occur if the Governing Board or the Local Authority has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted unreasonably in the performance of a duty. Intervention would have to be expedient in the sense that there would have to be something that the Secretary of State could instruct either party to do to put matters right..

The Schools Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to LA maintained schools in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether statutory policies adhere to education legislation. However, the SCU will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of the school.

The SCU will not overturn the school’s decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. The the SCU finds that the school has not handled a complaint in accordance with its procedure, it may request that the complaint is looked at again. The Secretary of State must be satisfied that a decision is unreasonable in the sense that no reasonable authority or governing Board, acting with due regard to its statutory responsibilities, would have reached that decision. The Secretary of State cannot do anything until the school has finished looking in to the complaint. Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling 0370 000 2288 or by going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Board will review this complaints policy on a regular basis. The Headteacher will log all formal complaints received by the school and will record how they were resolved.

Governors will examine the complaints log on an annual basis and will consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

School Policy Regarding Harassment Or Abusive Behaviour

The Headteacher and Governing Board are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents / carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues may treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, personally harassing, or unjustifiably repetitious
- An insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
- An insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (eg using abusive or threatening language; or making complaints in public; or refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly, but not limited to, if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.

In cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority

The governing board will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to action relating to harassment or abusive behaviour. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

Vexatious Complaints

South Gloucestershire Council Policy states: "A complaint may become vexatious when it has been properly considered and dealt with, but the complainant is not prepared to accept the conclusion or persists in making the same or substantially the same complaint. Continuing with such complaints can unreasonably take up time and resources and detract from the responsibility to others in the school community. If the Chair of Governors judges that a complaint has become vexatious, advice will be sought from the relevant officer in the Education Service.

Appendix 1

Complaints dealt with by the Local Authority

Guidance from the South Gloucestershire Council website

<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-education/school-complaints/>

You should initially make a complaint directly to the school (including a free school or an academy) by following their complaints procedure.

It is the responsibility of the governing board or academy trust to have and to publish a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. They are also responsible for dealing with any complaints which school staff could not resolve.

If you contact South Gloucestershire Council with your complaint, then the council will refer you back to the school.

If you have exhausted the school's own complaints process, you can forward your complaint to the Department for Education addressing your complaint to the Secretary of State. You should include all relevant documentation including correspondence.

Separate procedures apply to complaints about admission to school; about the statutory assessment of a child's special educational needs; the exclusion of pupils from school; school transport, home tuition, concerns or allegations against staff or volunteers; or child protection. If your query relates to any of these, you can contact the Complaints and Freedom of Information team on Tel: 01454 865924 or email: CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk

Complaints policy summary for parents July 2017

Pre Stage 1- Discussion with class teacher

The first point of contact regarding concerns should always be the class teacher. Appointments to see the class teacher are available both before and after school and may be made via the office. Please bear in mind though that teachers require time immediately before school to prepare for the day, and may have involvement with clubs or staff meetings after school, so may not always be available at short notice.

When meeting with the class teacher to raise your concerns, please be patient, the class teacher may need time to perform an investigation or put corrective measures in place and then determine their effectiveness. This informal stage may require several meetings to reach a conclusion satisfactory to all parties. Discuss desired actions for the school and parent, timescales, and further meetings during your appointment.

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Appeal to the Local Authority

Where a parent approaches the Local Authority with a complaint about the school, they will be advised to first contact the school and to follow the school's complaints procedure.

If the Complainant is not satisfied by the school's procedures, or they consider that the Governing Board has acted unreasonably, or not dealt with their case fairly and according to the published complaints policy then they may complain in writing to the Local Authority.

Appeal to the Secretary Of State

Finally, a complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families if a person believes that a Governing Board or Local Authority is acting "unreasonably", or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly (see Sections 496 and 497 of the Education Act 1996).

However, intervention can only occur if the Governing Board or the Local Authority has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted unreasonably in the performance of a duty.

Appendix 2



Longwell Green Primary School

Complaint Request Form

Please complete this form and return it to Headteacher [or Clerk to the governing board], who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school [e.g. parent of a pupil on the schools roll]:

.....

Pupil's name [if relevant to your complaint]:

.....

Your Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give concise details of your complaint, [including dates, names of witnesses etc...], to allow the matter to be fully investigated.:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.

Number of Additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? [i.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?]

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

Signature:

Date:

School use:

Date Form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:			
Date:			