

Saltersgate Junior School



Complaints Procedure Policy

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:

MRS M E OXER: HEADTEACHER
Mrs A Webber: CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Revision Date	Revision Version	Previous Revision Date	Previous Version	Summary of Changes
30/11/09				
04/04/11	1	30/11/09		None
04/09/12	2			Reflects DfEToolkit
11/09/15	3	04/09/13	2	None
07.09.2017	4	11.09.15	3	None

Aims:

This policy aims to help you in approaching Saltersgate Junior School when you feel you have a problem and outlines the procedures that will be taken.

This process has been developed to enable schools, parents/carers and visitors to work together to resolve issues.

Introduction:

Saltersgate Junior School will aim to provide as many opportunities to keep you informed and involved in your child's progress as it possibly can. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and good atmosphere in the school.

However, we recognise that there are times when things may go wrong, when concerns and differences of opinion can develop. These can usually be resolved by speaking to the right person in school.

The first step to resolving any concern or complaint is to discuss the issue with school. It is important to be clear about the issue that you want to discuss before approaching school. All conversations, whether oral or written, will be treated in confidence.

Although you may want a decision or situation to change, it is best for all parties if the discussions can end on a positive note with no bad feelings. Talking with school staff can help you to understand how they see the situation and give you the chance to say what it looks like to you.

The Headteacher has responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. They could be termed the school's 'complaints co-ordinator'

Stage 1: Informal Action

- ❖ Parents should discuss their concerns with the class teacher. If parents feel they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff they could be referred to another staff member.
- ❖ If the teacher or other staff member is unable to deal immediately with the matter, a clear note is made, including the complainant's name, phone number and date, and the parent is contacted as soon as the matter has been investigated. The teacher may also consult the Headteacher at this stage.
- ❖ The teacher ensures that the parent is clear what action or monitoring of the situation has been agreed.
- ❖ If no satisfactory solution has been found, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further.
- ❖ Any complaints or concerns that are not pupil based can be discussed with any staff member and the above procedures will take place.

Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher

- ❖ The Headteacher acknowledges the complaint, orally or in writing, within 3 working days.
- ❖ A meeting is arranged with the complainant to clarify and supplement any information given.
- ❖ The Headteacher investigates further, interviewing witnesses as appropriate. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil would normally be interviewed with a parent present or, if this is not possible, with a member of staff who is not directly involved.

- ❖ The Headteacher keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- ❖ Once all relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher responds.
- ❖ If the complaint was in writing, a written response will be sent.
- ❖ If the complainant is not satisfied, they are advised to write to the governing body.
- ❖ If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Stage 2 procedures are carried out by the Chair of the Governing Body.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- ❖ The Chair acknowledges receipt of the written complaint, informing the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by a committee of three members of the School's Governing Body within 20 working days.
- ❖ The Chair arranges to convene a Complaints Panel elected from members of the Governing Body. See below.

Stage 4: Beyond the Governing Body

- ❖ Complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education under Education Act 1996 on the grounds that a Governing Body or LA is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties under the act.

The Complaints Panel can:

- 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.
- It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants 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 welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

- ❖ The Chair of the committee will write and inform all concerned of the date, time and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance. The notification of the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend and the right to submit further written evidence.
- ❖ It is the responsibility of the Chair of the committee to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- ❖ After the meeting, the committee will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to all parties within 15 days.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

The Department strongly recommends that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed; if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel;

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure; each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The

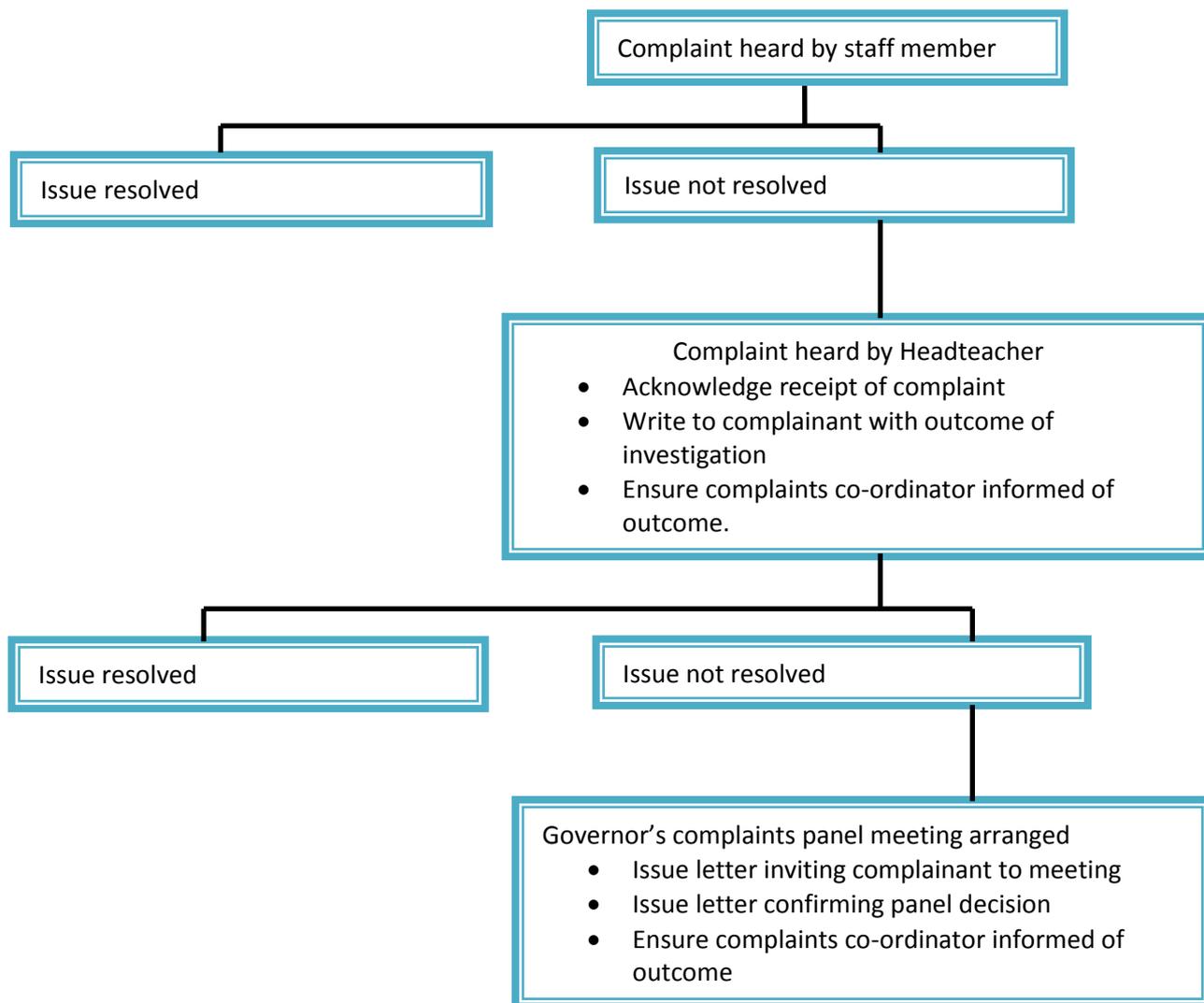
letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed, see below.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

Summary of Dealing with Complaints



PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS MADE BY PUPILS

Informal Resolution should be possible

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

1. All members of staff are encouraged to deal with a pupil concern and take it seriously.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the pupil's satisfaction.

2. If the initial person contacted is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the most appropriate member of the School Leadership Team.

3. Pupils making a complaint should be aware that they cannot be guaranteed confidentiality as members of staff receiving a complaint are expected to notify the Head prior to, wherever possible, taking action. It is also possible that the Pupil's parents or guardians will be informed.

4. Complaints will normally be acknowledged as soon as practicable and pupils will be told what is happening to their concern or complaint.

6. Once the complaint has been investigated the response will be explained to the pupil and implemented.

School Complaints Procedure

**Please complete and return to (complaints co-ordinator)
Who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to 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.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: