

Forest Glade Primary School



School Complaints Procedure

Background

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, the governing body of all maintained schools and nursery schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services the school provides. The law also requires the complaint procedure to be publicised (see website).

The exceptions to this requirement are complaints relating to the Curriculum, Collective Worship and Religious Education, some Special Educational Needs issues and Admission, where Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher can give information about this, and advice on who to contact in Nottingham County Council

There are certain other types of complaint which fall outside the remit of the governing body's complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

Allegations of abuse against a member of the school staff must be reported to the Headteacher immediately. Allegations of abuse against the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

For complaints that do not fall within the definition of curriculum complaints, the responsibility for dealing with them falls entirely on the governing body. Nottingham County Council may not take over this responsibility, and appeals against governing body decisions and procedures would be heard by the Secretary of State. In the case of Voluntary Aided schools if the governing body is not able to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Any complaints concerning the conduct of school staff will be handled in accordance with the schools internal disciplinary procedures. The details of such an investigation will remain confidential.

Each level of the procedure set offers the opportunity for concerns and complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Statement of Intent

We care about what you think....

At school we make many decisions every day. We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Head teacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Your views help us plan for the future. We also want parents to tell us about their worries, concerns or complaints as soon as possible. It is easier for us to sort out a recent problem than something that happened some time ago.

We know it can be difficult to question what a school is doing, but if you do not tell us what is worrying you, we cannot explain our actions or put things right.

Our promise to you

- We will deal with your concern or complaint honestly, politely and in confidence.
- It will be looked into thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- We will keep you up to date with what we are doing.

- We will apologise if we have made a mistake.
- We will tell you what we are going to do to put things right.

Procedure for handling concerns and complaints at Forest Glade Primary School

We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures laid down by the Local Authority (LA). If the school itself cannot resolve a complaint, those concerned can refer the matter to the LA (this will focus on how the school have dealt with the complaint-not the complaint itself). All parents have a right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

If necessary, support for the complainant should be arranged, for example, translation of any of the papers provided by the school or the LA, provision of an interpreter or any arrangements necessary to give the complainant full access to the proceedings, for example if the complainant has a disability.

Summary of Policy

This policy includes 3 levels of complaints procedure and guidance

- **Stage 1** – Informal concern (appointment with the class teacher, Key Stage leader)
- **Stage 1.1**- Informal concern (appointment with the Head teacher/Deputy Headteacher)
- **Stage 2**- Letter of concern (response by Teacher, Deputy Head teacher, Chair, Head Teacher)
- **Stage 3** – Formal complaint letter to the Head teacher/School
- **Stage 4** – Formal complaint to Chair and or request a Governors' Complaints Panel

Stage 1 – Dealing with Concerns Informally

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their **child's class teacher**. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy and safe at school, and is making good progress. They naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

Guidance

- Concerns should initially be dealt with in an informal manner that offers the best way of resolving issues.
- A class teacher should offer an appointment to discuss the issue as quickly as possible as this will give both parties time to talk about it calmly and politely without being interrupted. This can allow parties to remain calm. It will also show a commitment to resolving issues. It is important for parents to recognise that schools are busy organisations and that it may not be possible to offer an

- appointment immediately.
- The parties involved should be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.
 - It may be helpful in some cases to confirm undertakings given about future action or monitoring in writing

Stage 1.1

If the person/complainant is dissatisfied with the response with the class teacher they should be informed about how to take their complaint to **Stage 1.1**, by referring it to the Deputy Head teacher and or Head Teacher. This is still at the concern stage and every effort will be made to come to a resolution through offering informal intervention.

Guidance

- It is always best to resolve issues informally at the earliest possible time but if the person is not satisfied with the result of the talk with the teacher then he/she can ask for an appointment to meet with the Deputy or Head Teacher.
- It is in everyone's interest, particularly the child or children, for concerns to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.
- The aim should be that discussions end on a good note with both parties listening to each other and ending with no bad feeling. Actions need to be agreed by this point.
- A complainant can gain advice from Children's Services representatives and or other professional who may help with an early resolution.

It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved by now.

Stage 2 Dealing with Concerns Informally by letter

If the complainant wishes to write a letter instead of coming into school then this stage will also be treated as a concern and will be dealt with initially by the person the letter is addressed to.

The teacher will be informed and so may the Chair of Governors if she/he can be of assistance to offer informal intervention. However there is no obligation on any governor to become involved at this level. All parties will work together to reach a resolution for all concerned.

Concerns and/or complaints specifically relating to the Head Teacher.

Where the complaint relates to the Head Teacher and is unable to be resolved at the informal stage then the complainant can write to/and or involve the Chair of Governors at the school address marked 'urgent, private and confidential'. The complaints form is in the policy and at the back of our complaints procedure flyer which is kept in our reception area at the front of the school. The Chair of Governors should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 10 school days of receipt and may contact a Governor Support Officer for advice.

Stage 3 – Formal complaint letter to the Headteacher

- The Head teacher/and or the Chair of Governors considers any complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly; most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.
- If it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint, (not resolved through the other stages) a parent, carer will be invited to write a formal letter of complaint to the Head Teacher. The letter will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent , carer considers the issue to be unresolved.
- The Head Teacher will respond to the complainant within **10 working days** and invite them to a meeting to discuss a resolution.
- Written records of interviews with complainants and with staff or in the course of any investigation will be kept by the Head teacher.
- In the letter conveying the outcome, the complainant should be informed of the process for referral to the Chair of Governors if they wish to take their complaint further. **Any such referral should be made within 10 school days after receipt of the Headteacher's letter.**
- There may be issues that the head teacher will not be able to deal with because they are the responsibility of the council rather than Forest Glade Primary School. If this applies then we can help to direct you to the appropriate place.

Stage 4 – Formal complaint to Chair and or request a Governors' Complaints Committee

- Complainants wishing to move to Stage 4 of the formal complaints procedure will need to write a letter to the Chair of Governors' to request that a Governors Complaints Panel meets to hear the complaint. This will consist of at least three Governors.
- This formal complaint must be received within 20 school days of the last meeting with the Head Teacher concerning the issue. The complainant should write to the Chair of Governors at the school address marking the letter 'urgent and confidential'. The letter will need to set out the complaint that has previously been formally discussed with the Head Teacher and show why the matter is not resolved. Additionally it should detail what actions would resolve the complaint. A template is included as **Appendix A** to this complaints procedure.

Before the meeting:

The chair of Governors should:

- Appoint a clerk to the Governors Complaint's Panel
- Acknowledge the complainants letter in writing within 10 days of receipt
- Arrange for a panel of Governors to meet within 12 and 20 school days from the receipt of the letter. The governing body should have nominated three members to serve on the committee with reserves, to ensure that sufficient governors are available to hold a meeting within the specified time period. When considering the membership of the complaints committee, the governing body should have regard to whether it would be advisable to include governors who are employed at the school, and that it is a cross section of the categories of Governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. ***The Chair of Governors should not be a member of the committee as s/he will have been involved at the previous stage.***
- Provide the Head Teacher with a copy of the complainant's letter and request written documentation relevant to the complaint from the school.

The clerk should send both the complainant's letter and the school documentation to the Governor's Complaints Panel members, complainant and Head Teacher (and anyone else involved in the meeting) at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The complainant, Head Teacher and where appropriate the Chair of Governors (evidence gathering), should be invited to attend the Governors Complaints Panel meeting to give a verbal statement in support of their documentation. Each of them can bring someone to support them if they wish.

The Meeting:

The complainant and the Head Teacher should provide all the relevant information they wish and the GCP members should clarify any points. After the complainant and the Head Teacher have provided all the information they wish the Chair will ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk. Following a discussion and agreed actions all parties will be recalled to the meeting to be informed of the decision. A letter will follow to confirm actions agreed in writing.

After the Meeting:

The GCP will write to all concerned within 10 school days to explain their decision and suggest a resolution to the problem, if appropriate. The decision of the GCP is final.

The decision of the GCP will not be investigated. If however the complainant feels that the School and the governors have not followed the schools complaints procedure correctly, he/she can contact the Local Authority for assistance if they have any concerns about the schools procedures.

A complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education if a person believes that a governing body or LA 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 happen if the Governing body or the LA has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted unreasonably in the performance of a duty. Intervention would have to be expedient which means that there would have to be something that the Secretary of State could instruct either party to do to put matters right. He/she must be satisfied that the decision is unreasonable in the sense that no reasonable authority or Governing body, acting with due regard to its statutory responsibilities, would have reached that decision.

Complaints Against the Head teacher

Stage 2 should also serve as the first point at which formal concerns are specifically about the Head teacher or an individual governor. Should the complaint be about the Chair, the Vice-Chair should undertake any investigation.

Any parent/s who have a concern about the Head teacher, should first make an **informal approach** to one of the members of the governing body, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint as detailed above.

Exceptions to the Policy:

The exceptions to this requirement are complaints relating to the curriculum, collective worship and Religious Education, some Special Educational needs issues and admission where local authorities have statutory responsibilities. The Head Teacher can provide information about this and advice on who to contact.

There are other complaints that fall outside the remit of the governing body's complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

Allegations of abuse against a member of the school staff must be reported to the Head Teacher immediately. Allegations of abuse against the Head Teacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

Monitoring and Review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly.

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 available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Communicating this Policy

The policy will be listed on the school's publication scheme (Freedom of Information Act 2000) and made available to parents via the prospectus, and on request-as below.

Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of age, gender, race, religion, belief, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals.

All staff have equal access and inclusive rights to their work regardless of their age , gender sexual orientation , race, religion, belief, disability or ability.

Forest Glade is committed to create a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

Appendix 1

Complaint Letter Template for Forest Glade Primary

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address:
Telephone number(s):
Details of the complaint:
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: Date:

Outcome: Resolved/To be taken further/Needs to be re visited in the future <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>	
Date: Signature School Member	Parent/Member of the public

Appendix 2

Concerns and Complaints Information for Parents at Forest Glade Primary School



Forest Glade Primary School wants pupils to be healthy, happy and safe, and do well. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in school.

I have something I would like to discuss with the school...

Take time to read this leaflet.

Remember that there is usually more than one view about a situation. Make sure that what you want to discuss is clear in your mind. A good tip is to write down the main points so that you don't forget anything.

First consider asking to see the teacher to discuss the issue. They will be willing to offer an appointment as quickly as possible which will give you both time to talk about it politely and calmly without being interrupted. Think about what you hope will happen as a result of your discussion and let the teacher know this.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the discussions or just wish to have some support from a Senior Leader you can ask for one of them to be present. It will be best to end on a positive note with no bad feeling even if it is not possible for all of your request to be met.

If a solution is proving difficult the Senior Leader can speak to the Head Teacher. If this is proving difficult the Head Teacher can also speak to a Governor who may be willing to offer some input to help resolve the issue, but there is no obligation for any governor to become involved at this time.

Most problems should have been resolved by now.

However, if the issue has not been resolved (through the other stages) it can become a formal complaint. This is a serious step to take and it is important that you have thought through things carefully. If you wish to follow the process for making a complaint you must ask the school for a copy of their complaints procedure and write a formal letter of complaint to the Head Teacher. The letter will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent, carer considers the issue to be unresolved.

What happens if I have a concern specifically about the Headteacher?

If you have a concern specifically about the Head Teacher you should write to the Chair of Governors at the school address, marking the envelope 'urgent, private and confidential' setting out your concern.

What happens if my concern relates to admissions, the curriculum or special educational needs?

Some issues regarding these are covered by statutory regulations. The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher can give you information about these issues.