



<h1>Complaints Policy</h1>	
School Aim Statement:	<p>Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the church at parish and diocesan level.</p> <p>The Christian Faith, and its practical expression, form a major part of the whole school ethos. The school aims to give children both knowledge and understanding of the Christian Faith while respecting and understanding other religions and cultures.</p> <p>The school aims to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all children receive their entitlement to a broad, balanced National Curriculum, encouraging them to have high expectations in all areas of the curriculum and to reach their full potential. • provide a secure and relaxed environment in which the children are encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle, to be tolerant and to grow in confidence and self-esteem. • ensure that pupils develop an open and enquiring mind and are encouraged to be creative, imaginative and inventive. • work in partnership with parents and the wider community.
Review History:	<p>This policy was developed by: Andy Wardle Head teacher</p> <p>How: Discussion by and approval from the whole staff on 16th June 2006</p> <p>Reviewed by Governors: July 2006, February 2011, Feb 2017</p> <p>Next review date: February 2019</p>
Issue Date:	February 2017

Introduction

Dunchurch Boughton C of E Junior School aims to achieve a high level of quality education for its children, however it is recognised that in certain circumstances parents may wish to complain or express concerns.

The school acknowledges the importance and right of parents to have their complaints investigated promptly and the results communicated back to the parents at the earliest possible moment.

It is the duty of all staff to be aware of any dissatisfaction and to communicate such information to her/his supervisor if they cannot deal properly with the matter immediately.

Our complaints procedure is designed to handle all complaints which cannot be resolved simply by a friendly, open and constructive discussion.

The difference between a concern and a compliant

A concern may be defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. A compliant may be generally defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken or a lack of action”.



Arrangements

- Parents will be made aware of the complaints procedure via the school website.
- Any person, including members of the general public may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions).
- The Governing body will identify at the start of each academic year five members who will serve on a complaints panel plus two reserves. The panel has delegated powers and the chair should identify three governors to hear the complaint.
- Individuals in school should document as soon as possible any situations that may give rise to a complaint. Retain any evidence and detail the names of any witnesses.
- The Governing body will be informed each term of the number of complaints and the level at which they were received.
- All complaints will be logged with the Head teacher.
- When a complaint is received, a written acknowledgement shall normally be sent by the school within one working week, contact may be made the following day to discuss and expand with the complainant and this may clear the complaint at the same time.
- Confidentiality is important in securing the confidence of all concerned. Conversations and correspondence must be treated with discretion and investigators should be sensitive to the feelings of those involved. Parents need to feel confident that a complaint will not disadvantage their child. However, the parties to a complaint need to be aware that some information may have to be shared in order to carry out a thorough investigation.
- If the investigation of a complaint shows that it is justified, then the school should consider how to make amends in an appropriate way.
- All complaints should be recorded and monitored to identify issues and allow any lessons to be learned by the school.

Possible sources of complaint

The following are the main areas from which complaints may arise.

- If there is a breakdown of relationship, however temporary, attitudes of one person to another may be affected.
- Concerns about the behaviour of a child.
- An incident of alleged bullying.
- Alleged failure on the part of someone in the school to undertake a promised action.
- Perceived lack of action on the part of an individual or the school to deal with a situation.
- Alleged failure to deliver the curriculum.
- The way in which the school organises teaching groups or classes.
- The provision of school meals.
- Conflict between estranged parents over the application of parental responsibility.

What is not covered by the complaints procedure?

- Exclusions from school
- Special educational needs



- Admissions to school
- Alleged misconduct of staff, this is dealt with under the personnel procedures.

Can parents take their complaint further?

Parents cannot take their appeal further than the governing body. The Local Authority cannot investigate school matters on a parent's behalf nor can it review how the school has dealt with a complaint. If a parent feels that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, they can write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Department for Education and Skills, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1 P 3BT.

Unreasonable Complainants

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complaint becomes unreasonable (e.g. the complainant tries to re-open the same issue), the Chair of the Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Legal advice should be obtained if doing this.

The Governors of Dunchurch Boughton C of E Junior (VA) School have adopted the following procedure to deal with formal-complaints from members of the school community or general public, this is derived from the LA model complaint policy Sept 2013.

Dealing with concerns at the earliest opportunity

If parents, pupils or members of the public have concerns they should:

1. Discuss their concerns with the member of staff most directly involved *and, if not satisfied;*
2. Discuss their concerns with a senior member of staff

We expect the majority of concerns will be resolved in this way (and not recorded as a formal complaint).

However if not the following formal procedure will be followed

1. The complainant should discuss their concerns with the Headteacher. This is ***Stage 1 of the formal process***

At each stage in the procedure, schools will want to keep in mind ways in which a concern or complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the concern or complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an appropriate apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- a commitment to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. Equally, an effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Only where all these avenues have been tried and found unsatisfactory should the complainant take a complaint to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body.



Principles informing our complaints procedure

This procedure is designed to:

- be well publicised and easily accessible
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- allow a mediation process if agreed by the complainant
- allow for a hearing of a panel of Governors, where appropriate
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible
- address all points of issue, provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- provide information to the school's Senior Management Team so that services can be improved.

Making a Complaint to the Governing Body - Stage 2

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body at the school address. The envelope should be marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION' 'PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL' and staff in the school office must ensure that the letter is forwarded without delay.

The complainant will be asked to complete a complaint form (Appendix 1) if they have not already done so. The Chair of Governors or Clerk will offer to help an individual to complete the form if appropriate

On receipt of the complaint form the Chair of Governors (or other governor) will:

- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

At this point the chair of governors will decide whether the complaint should go straight to the governors' complaints panel or whether a mediation stage should be offered. Mediation can only proceed if the complainant and the Headteacher are willing for it to be tried. If mediation is not successful, the complaint will be considered by the governors' complaints panel.

Mediation

Mediation can be a good way to resolve a complaint because:

- It gives both complainant and Headteacher another opportunity to hear each other's points of view (with a third party facilitating)
- It gives the third party an opportunity to help the Headteacher and complainant identify and build on areas of agreement
- It gives Headteacher and complainant a structure within which they can resolve remaining differences.
- If both complainant and Headteacher emerge from the mediation satisfied, that is the best foundation for a continuing positive relationship between them.
- Even if the complaint continues to a governors' panel, the issues to be considered are likely to be much clearer following the mediation.

Mediation may elicit one or more of the responses listed below from either party:

- an acknowledgment that the complaint is valid in whole or in part.
- an appropriate apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an acceptance that the complaint needs go no further
- a commitment to review school policies in light of the complaint.

See Appendix 3 for Mediation facilitator options



Governors' Complaints Panel

Where the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with fully and properly, they may choose to take it to a panel of Governors .

Establishing a complaints panel

The governing body should agree the composition of the complaints panel at the first meeting of the governing body each year.

As governors may not be available at all times governing bodies are advised to agree the names of 4 or 5 possible governors from whom a panel of three may be drawn. The decision about the membership of a particular panel will depend on factors such as availability, whether any governors have prior knowledge or have a conflict etc. and the decision will be made by the chair of governors.

When the clerk of governors receives a copy of the complaint form he/she will inform the governing body that a complaint has been received and that it has been passed to the panel to deal with.

No further information about the complaint should be shared with other governors.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a) 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.
- b) 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
- c) 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 not intimidating and not adversarial

The Chair of the Panel will be nominated by the Chair of Governors and is responsible for ensuring that both complainant and Headteacher are given a fair hearing and that the panel arrives at its judgment without fear or favour.

Remit of the panel: 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 problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It may:

- Consider and, if appropriate, criticise the way in which an operational decision was communicated—**but cannot overturn the decision itself**
- Consider the thoroughness with which the Headteacher investigated a complaint about a member of staff —**but cannot expect the Headteacher to provide details about confidential discussions with that staff member.**
- Consider the manner in which a complaint about any decision was addressed ask for the decision to be reviewed—**but cannot expect the Headteacher to have changed the decision**
- Consider and, if appropriate, identify limitations in a policy or procedures —**but cannot make changes to the policy.** (It can, however, recommend that the policy be reviewed by the governing body to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur, and individual panel members can subsequently play their part in improving the policy)
- Consider whether it should recommend that the governing body offer appropriate redress

Format of a Panel Hearing

1. Complainant and Headteacher will enter the room where the hearing is taking place together.
2. The chair will introduce the panel members and the clerk and outline the process.
3. The complainant is invited to explain the complaint,
4. The Headteacher may question the complainant



5. The panel will question the complainant
6. The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions
7. The complainant may question the Headteacher
8. The panel will question the Headteacher
9. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
10. The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
11. The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five working days.
12. Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
13. The clerk will remain with the panel to clarify any issues

Notes

The hearing should be made as unthreatening as possible to all parties.

The panel may ask questions at any point. Panel members must find ways to ask probing questions while maintaining impartiality.

The Headteacher must have no contact with members of the governors' complaints panel except when the complainant is present to preserve the principle of neutrality. This means that Headteacher and complainant enter and leave the room where the hearing is held together.

The chair of the panel should discourage the introduction of fresh documentary evidence at the hearing — there should be every encouragement to produce the evidence in advance so that both sides have time to study it. However, if new and relevant evidence is accepted by the chair, the chair will adjourn the hearing for a few minutes to allow everyone to read the document. Both parties must leave the hearing room during the adjournment.

Some notes on exceptional circumstances

For the sake of clarity, the description above does not cover exceptional circumstances which might include:

1. The chair of governors may not be able to find three governors who have no prior knowledge of the case

If a case has become a major talking point around the community, the chair can nominate three governors with minimal prior knowledge

If there are still insufficient governors able to sit on a panel, the governing body in consultation with the Local Authority or Diocese will put in place an alternative fair process.

Please consult Governor Services in the first instance on 01926 412259

A complaint to the governors' complaints panel will never be against a junior member of staff (it may be against the way the Headteacher handled a complaint against a junior member of staff) but it is conceivable that a senior manager will appropriately stand in for the Headteacher. That would need to be considered very carefully but if agreed the senior manager would be 'the Headteacher' for the purpose of the panel.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which the complaint is against the chair of governors —e.g. for refusing to deal with a complaint. In those circumstances the procedure above would be adapted and every reference to 'Headteacher' would be read as 'chair of governors'.

Writing the decision letter

The clerk should ensure that s/he has clear wording stating the panel decision about each of the issues that the panel considered before the panel is allowed to finish. The clerk will use that wording to draft the decision letter. This should be sent to all members of the panel for checking. Once approved by all three panel members, it should be sent to the complainant with a copy to the Headteacher.

The letter should clearly express how seriously the panel considered the complaint.

The clerk should be careful that the letter sticks to the facts and gives no hint of partiality.



The clerk should ensure that the letter reaches the complainant and the Headteacher by the deadline stated in your policy and/or in a statement by the chair at the end of the hearing —usually five working days.

Monitoring Complaints

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints would contribute to school improvements. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and Governing Body can be useful to evaluating the school's performance. Any discussion of complaints by the Governing Body or others in the school community should not name or be able to identify individuals.

The flowchart Appendix 2 summarises the complaints process.



Appendix 1

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to.....
who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:.....

Address:.....
.....
.....

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

If applicable, name of child(ren) at school:

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?) Your relationship to the school, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of public:

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Complaints Policy



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JUNIOR SCHOOL

Official Use:

Date of acknowledgement sent:

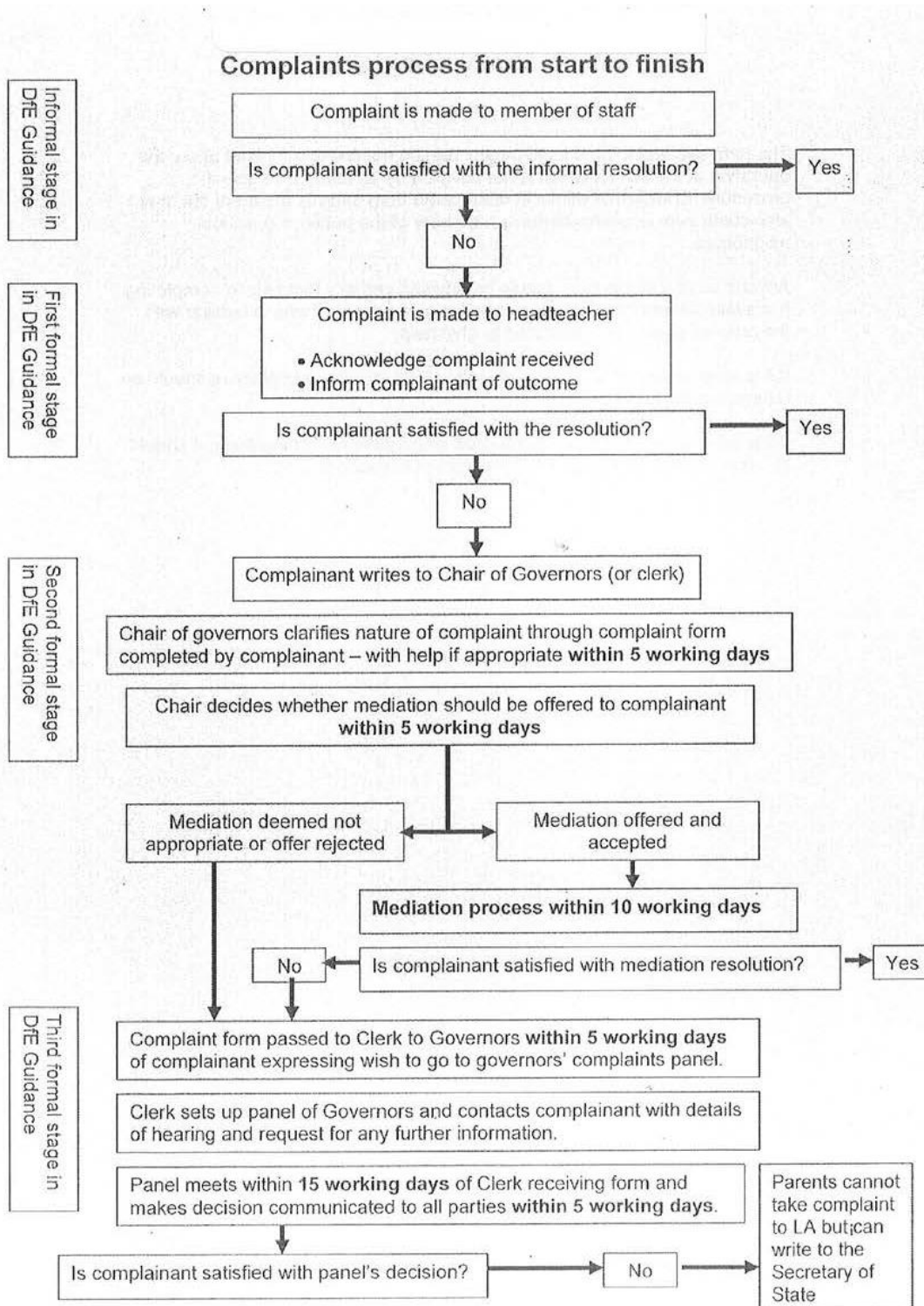
By Whom:.....

Complaint referred to:

Date:



Appendix 2





Appendix 3 Mediation

The benefits of mediation

Mediation can be a good way to resolve a complaint because:

- It gives both complainant and Headteacher another opportunity to hear each other's points of view (with a third party facilitating)
- It gives the third party an opportunity to help Headteacher and complainant explore and build on areas of agreement
- It gives Headteacher and complainant a structure within which they can resolve remaining differences.
- If both complainant and Headteacher emerge from the mediation satisfied, that is the best foundation for a continuing positive relationship between them.
- Even if the complaint continues to a governors' panel, the issues to be considered should be much clearer.

Mediation may elicit one or more of the responses listed below from either party:

- an acknowledgment that the complaint is valid in whole or in part.
- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- a commitment to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Recourse to mediation must be with the agreement of both parties and is intended to help arrive at a mutually agreeable solution—it is not possible to impose this on either party. Nor does it prevent a complainant having recourse to formal appeals procedures as detailed.

In-house mediation

Many chairs of governors and other governors already have the skills—or can acquire the skills—to conduct a mediation process between the Headteacher and a complainant. The skills and attributes include:

- ability to listen impartially to both sides
- ability to control a dialogue so that both sides listen to each other
- ability to summarise the arguments and focus the dialogue
- ability to identify areas of agreement that might form a basis for resolving one or more of the issues relating to the complaint
- understanding that solutions cannot be imposed and that both parties need to be satisfied with whatever is resolved.
- understanding that mediation does not always work and there is a further step available to complainants.

If the governing body requires outside help

WCC Governor Services offers a mediation service where a trained clerk, governor or adviser acts as mediator.

The mediation 'package' consists of the following elements:

- familiarisation with the background and nature of the complaint (including the reading of supporting documentation and interviews with the complainant, staff and governors as appropriate. These may be 'face to face' or by telephone);
- a mediation meeting between the complainant and a representative of the school;
- a written summary of the mediation meeting including, where appropriate, recommendations in relation to school policies, procedures and actions.

Complaints Policy



DUNCHURCH BOUGHTON C of E (VA)
JUNIOR SCHOOL

Mediation will be undertaken by a trained clerk, governor or adviser not directly linked to the school in order to ensure complete impartiality.

This service can be accessed on a consultancy basis. The standard cost of the above package is a half day unit. Where the process of familiarisation with the background to the complaint indicates that a half day of consultancy is likely to be inadequate, the school will be advised of this fact before proceeding further.

**To access the mediation service contact Governor Services on
01926 412259**

Support and Training:

For advice or training in relation to the process please contact **Governor Services on
01926 412259**