

Stockton Wood Primary School
Complaints Procedures



Stockton Wood Primary school takes its responsibility for children seriously. We value the support and partnership of parents and carers. We try very hard to get things right. However, despite everyone's best efforts, situations may arise which require further attention.

A complaint is defined as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to a school or teacher, which requires a response."

Pupils, parents or carers can make a complaint to the school about most aspects of its function including:

- Attitude / behaviour of staff
- Teaching and learning
- Application of behaviour management systems
- Bullying
- Provision of extra-curricular activities

The Local Authority retains responsibility for

- The National Curriculum
- Collective Worship in schools
- Provision of support services e.g. SEN, education welfare, educational psychology

Complaints about these matters will be referred to Children's Services' corporate complaints procedure.

Members of the general public may make complaints to the school if the school is directly responsible for the issue being complained about e.g.

- Behaviour of pupils during break-times
- Disturbance to neighbours during school hours
- Health and Safety issues of premises
- Behaviour of staff

A Quick Guide for Parents

Stage 1

Many concerns can be resolved quickly with goodwill, often by making early contact with the class teacher or Key Stage Manager. If this is not possible, or the teacher is unable to resolve the concern, the parent, carer or pupil will contact the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

The person who receives the complaint will attempt to work with the family to resolve the complaint informally. This may involve

- Mediation and conciliation
- Explaining policies or decisions
- Helping the pupil to express their views to another person
- Review of educational provision
- Review of support services

Most complaints will be dealt with in this way.

Stage 2

If the pupil, parent or carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal investigation, they may wish to make a formal complaint. This will be done in writing to the Head Teacher.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, or if the problem is not resolved, the matter will be referred to the Chair of Governors of the school.

The school and its governors have a duty in law to act properly and investigate complaints impartially. Once investigations are complete the person making the complaint will receive a written response from the school.

Stage 3

Pupils, parents and carers who are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and wish to pursue a complaint regarding a school issue can refer the complaint to a review committee of Governors, known as the complaints panel. This can be done by writing to the Chair of the Governing Body. The aim of the panel is to establish any areas of agreement and identify actions that can be taken to resolve the complaint.

Complaint procedures – stages:

Stage 1

The vast majority of concerns can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away by the class teacher, office staff, or the Head Teacher, depending on whom the parent first approaches. It is in everyone's best interests that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. This allows staff to establish whether a person is asking a question, expressing an opinion or making a complaint.

The member of staff first contacted will clarify the nature of the concern and re-assure the parent that the school wants to hear about it. If the member of staff can resolve the concern immediately they will do so. They will then record the enquiry and any agreements made, and notify the Head Teacher.

We will respect the wish of a parent who indicates they would have difficulty discussing their concerns with a particular member of staff. Similarly, if a member of staff feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, they will be able to pass the concern to another member of staff.

If the member of staff can't resolve the concern, they will make a clear note of the date, name, contact address and phone number and a brief note of the nature of the concern. It would also be useful to record what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.

The member of staff will then refer the complaint to the Head Teacher, or designated Deputy. The Head Teacher must decide if the concern is covered by the complaints procedure or will be dealt with under other procedures e.g. Safeguarding/child protection or personnel.

If the concern involves an allegation of assault or abuse of a child by a member of staff, the Head Teacher must inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

If the concern is about the Head Teacher, the member of staff will provide the parent with details of how to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.

The staff member dealing with the concern will make sure that the parent is kept informed of any action taken. The emphasis at this stage will be on resolving the issue quickly and informally for the benefit of staff, pupils and parents.

The parent will receive a response as soon as possible, and within a maximum of 15 school days. At this stage the response may be given verbally or in writing. The parent will be given information on how to proceed if they are not satisfied and where to get independent advice.

Stage 2

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Head Teacher. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher the parent should write to the Chair of the Governing body who will carry out the Stage Two procedure. If the parent has difficulty expressing themselves in writing, they will be informed where they can get independent assistance.

The Head Teacher will acknowledge the complaint within 3 school days. The acknowledgement will include a summary of the complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response. This will be within 15 school days. If this date cannot be met, the parent will be contacted and given a reason for the delay and a revised target date.

The Head Teacher will provide an opportunity for the parent to meet him/her to discuss their concerns and find solutions. It will be made clear that the parent may bring a friend, family member or advocate to the meeting if they wish. Interpreting services will also be made available where necessary. The Head Teacher may find it useful to have another member of staff present to observe and record the meeting and promote staff safety. Care will be taken in these circumstances not to create an intimidating atmosphere for the parent.

The Head Teacher will make whatever enquiries s/he considers necessary to ascertain the facts and the legitimacy of decisions taken.

It is important that the Head Teacher investigates complaints thoroughly and objectively. If s/he feels unable to do this (e.g. if s/he has been directly involved in the decision making process that led to the complaint) s/he will delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint to another member of the management team or the chair of governors. The Head Teacher (or designated person) will keep a record of interviews, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Having considered all the information gathered during the investigation the head teacher must now form a conclusion. The potential outcomes of an investigation may include, that:

- The complaint is not upheld and there is no evidence to support it.
- The complaint is not upheld, however, a misunderstanding appears to have occurred, possibly because the person has not had access to the context of the matter or has not been provided with all the facts.
- The complaint is found to be malicious or vexatious.
- The complaint is upheld and requires an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- The complaint is upheld and requires an assurance that the event complained of will not recur.

Dependent on the outcome of the investigation the following actions to improve school relations may be considered:

- Where a complaint is not upheld, the complainant may be invited to meet the head teacher to receive the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why the complaint has no substance.
- Whether or not the complaint is upheld, the complainant may be invited to attend a meeting in order to improve relationships. This can only be achieved by mutual agreement.
- Where a complaint is upheld, it may be appropriate for the school to provide an apology to the complainant, an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again and an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

- Where a complaint is not upheld and the complaint is found to be malicious or vexatious, the school should consider actions available to it to resolve the matter.

A letter should be sent to the parents notifying them of whether or not the complaint was upheld.

It may be useful at this point to offer the parent a meeting to discuss the response and seek reconciliation. The parent will be provided with details of how to contact the Governing body if they are not satisfied with the response.

Stage 3

APPEAL PROCEDURE

If parents are dissatisfied with the decision of the head teacher set against a realistic expectation of the outcome of the complaint, they may appeal to an appropriate committee of the Governing Body, in order to present their case. The committee members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint.

They must register that wish in writing to the Chair of Governors within seven days of receiving the decision.

The Clerk to the Governors will convene a meeting of the appropriate committee within three weeks of receiving the appeal, unless there are exceptional circumstances, which will lead to a date being fixed at a later time.

Copies of the full details of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation will be submitted to the appropriate committee not less than three days before the meeting.

At the meeting of the appropriate committee the parents will present their complaint to the governors and the head teacher will present the response. Either party may wish to call witnesses in support of their case.

The decision of the appropriate committee, subject to the principles of confidentiality, will be provided to the parents in writing within five working days of the meeting. The committee may:

- 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.

The decision of the appropriate committee will be final. A written statement outlining the decision of the committee must be sent to the parents and head teacher within five working days of the Appeal hearing.

Complainants will retain the right to pursue their complaints to the Secretary of State for Education.

Ofsted can investigate complaints about the work of the school as a whole, but are not in a position to investigate any matter that relates only to one child or family.

Complaints may be withdrawn in writing at any time.

The Head Teacher and Chair of Governors will review the issue of concern and consider whether further investigation is required through other internal management systems.

A good complaints procedure can limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there may be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure being followed, the parent remains dissatisfied.

Useful Contacts

Stockton Wood Primary School

Chair of Governors: Mr. R. Finch (communication addressed to the Chair can be delivered to school)

Head teacher Mrs. S.E. Price

Parent Partnership: Email: parentpartnership@liverpool.gov.uk

Local Government Ombudsman www.lgo.org.uk

Department for Education www.dfe.gov.uk

Ofsted www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner www.childrenscommissioner.org