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Complaints Policy

Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures set out by the LEA. If the school cannot resolve any complaint itself, those concerned can ask the LEA to intervene.

All parents have the 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.

Aims and objectives

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 and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

The complaints process

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. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

Should a parent have a complaint about the headteacher, or the way in which they have handled a complaint against a member of staff i.e. if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

A formal complaint should be made to the Governing Body (GB). This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors (CofG) via the School Office.

When considering a complaint the CofG may wish to seek technical or procedural advice from Officers of the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service on the appropriate course of action to be taken.

The GB must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It arranges a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invites the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

Membership of the Complaints Committee should include at least three governors. Members should be independent and impartial; the Headteacher should not be a member. No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.

The aim of the investigation will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

An effective panel will acknowledge that the complainant may 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 welcome as possible.

The complainant must be given the opportunity to make representation and the school the right of reply.

After hearing all the evidence, the Governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing.

If the investigation upholds the complaint it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- 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;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of guilt.

However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the governors do not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his/her complaint has been taken seriously.

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service or the Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, our Complaints Procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors, is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Monitoring and review

The Governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all written complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

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

