



EASTFIELD INFANTS' & NURSERY SCHOOL LACEY GARDENS JUNIOR SCHOOL



COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS PROCEDURE

GUIDANCE for PARENTS:

Introduction

In this school all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and believe that school and parents must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help pupils gain the most from their time in school.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it to, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

- The first step:

Please arrange to discuss any concerns with your child's class teacher, or with the particular teacher concerned. We hope that most problems can be sorted out this way.

- The second step:

If, after speaking to your child's teacher, you do not feel that your complaint has been properly dealt with, or if your concern is about the conduct of a particular teacher, then you should discuss the matter with that teacher's manager.

In primary schools this is usually the Head Teacher, Mrs Akhurst. In almost all cases we can sort things out satisfactorily in this way.

- The third step:

You should make a formal written complaint to the Head Teacher, unless the complaint is about the conduct of the Head Teacher. You should then receive a written response.

- Taking matters further:

If your complaint is about the conduct of the Head Teacher, or, if you are dissatisfied with the Head Teacher's response to your formal complaint letter, then you will need to contact the governors.

You should send written details of your complaint, with any correspondence and evidence to support your complaint, to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address. If, for some reason, you do not feel able to do so, you should contact the Clerk, via the school, who will record your complaint as a statement for you to sign.

The governors will consider your complaint and write to advise you of the outcome.

- External Appeal:

The decision of the governors is normally final; however, if you are dissatisfied with the governors' response, you may be able to take your complaint to an external body.

For certain complaints about schools maintained by the Local Authority, parents can write to the Secretary of State for Education. You must do this in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Team
Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
WA7 2GJ

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school/how-to-complain-to-the-department-about-a-school>

You should be aware that the Secretary of State for Education will usually only consider a complaint once the school's internal processes have been exhausted. For the Secretary of State to intervene in a matter, he would also need to be sure that:

- The school has acted or proposes to act unreasonably in the exercise or performance of its functions under certain legislation
- Or, the school has failed to carry out a duty at all under certain legislation.
-

Please note that, unless your complaint is about the governors' response or lack of response, your complaint will generally have to be considered first by the governing body of the school.

Time Limits

You should make the school aware of your complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred that you wish to complain about. Usually, we would expect you to do this within three months of the incident occurring and if you do not contact the school within that time, we will not usually consider your complaint.

If your complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented you from meeting the time limit, you can provide an explanation of these circumstances along with your complaint so that Governors can take them into account.

The final decision rests with Governors as to whether your complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three month time limit.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when parents raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school. Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Using abusive or threatening language and/or behaviour.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources in pursuit of a complaint, whether in person, by phone, email or letter.
- Harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy.
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint.
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand.
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.

The school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond / address any issues.

Where a parent raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. The actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

- An informal approach to inform the parent that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified.
- A formal written communication advising the parent that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken if the behaviour is not modified.
- Setting limitations on the method and frequency of contact with staff / school personnel.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing and deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause.
- Setting limitations on the parent's access to the school site.

It should be noted that parents do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be banned from entering the school site with immediate effect after an incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

Any restrictions placed on a parent as a result of this policy will be time limited, with a specified date as to when the restrictions will be reviewed and potentially lifted.

Again, we would emphasise that the Head Teacher and Governing Body are committed to ensuring a full and fair consideration of all legitimate complaints and we recognise that the majority of parents will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. However, we reserve the right to take any necessary actions under this policy in those rare cases where a parent does not.

10. REVIEW

Policy approved by governors on 5th July 2017

Original Signed by Philip Sturman
Chair of Standards & Wellbeing Committee

Planned review date: Spring 2020

APPENDIX 1

COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS – MODEL COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher or the Clerk to Governors depending on the stage of your complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement and an explanation of the process.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Your address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you 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 only

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date of referral:

APPENDIX 2

COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS – GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS

Governors Complaints Procedure - refer also to flow chart at end of this section

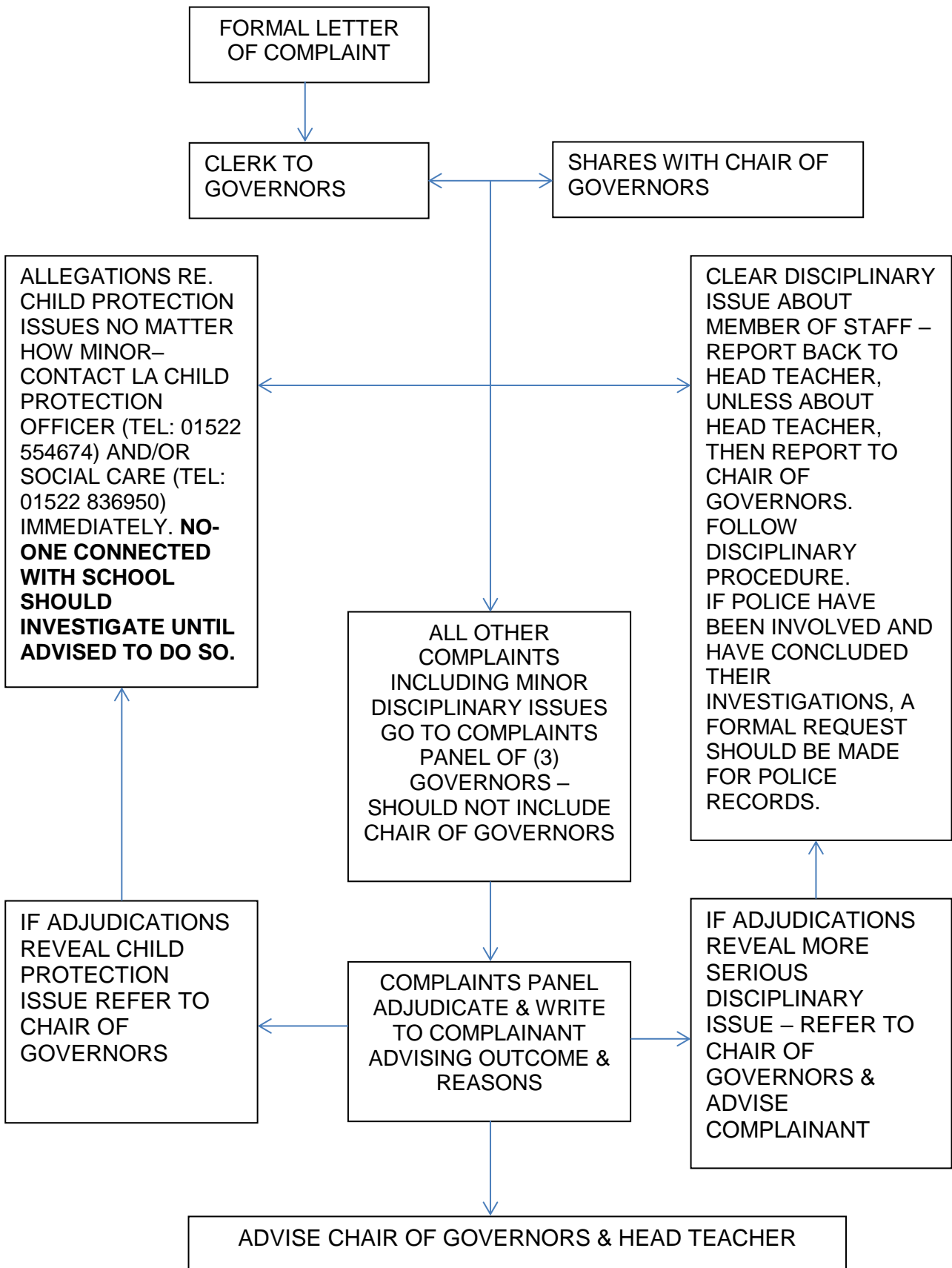
- If a parent is not satisfied with the response from the Head Teacher regarding their complaint or if their complaint is about the Head Teacher, then he/she is entitled to take their complaint to the Governing Body.
- All complaints to the Governing Body must be in writing and should include full details of the complaint, enclosing any supporting evidence. This should be sent to the clerk to the governors, care of the school. The clerk will then ensure the complaints process is started as soon as practicable (a complainant can request that the clerk to the governors write down the complaint on their behalf where writing a letter is difficult).
- A minimum of three governors should be selected to form a complaints committee to consider the complaint. It is recommended that the Chair of Governors is not on this committee. Those governors chosen should ideally have no knowledge whatsoever of the details surrounding the complaint or of the complainant themselves.
- It is appreciated that this may not always be possible, particularly in some rural schools. However, the Governing Body should always try to find impartial governors whenever possible.
- Once the complaints committee has been formed, they must then decide how they wish to consider the complaint.
- Governors of LA maintained schools effectively have two options available. They can choose to deal with the complaint by means of an oral hearing or through written representations, but in making their decision they must be sensitive to any needs the complainant has. The LA advises maintained schools that, wherever possible and appropriate, it should be through written representations.
- If the governors of a maintained school choose to have an oral hearing, the parent will be invited to attend a meeting where they will be able to put their complaint personally to the governors. The Head Teacher should also be present to respond to the complaint. Teachers should not attend. If their evidence is needed, it should either be obtained via the Head Teacher, or where this is not appropriate, by a governor either before or after the meeting with the parent. The governors will only make a decision about the complaint once they have heard the parent's and the school's evidence.
- The structure of such a meeting should be flexible. However, it is anticipated it will follow a similar process to exclusion or admission appeals. The complaints committee should have familiarised themselves with the written complaint before the meeting opens and will have an opportunity to ask any questions, as will the Head Teacher. The complaint should then be responded to by the Head Teacher with questions from both parties being permitted. Each party can then be asked to summarise their position. Both parties will then leave to allow the governors to make their decision in private.
- Both the complainant and Head Teacher are entitled to bring a representative with them if they wish. Although it would not normally be necessary, either party may bring a legal representative if they wish. Either party intending to bring a representative would be expected to contact the clerk to the governors before the hearing to notify them.

- If the governors do not wish to hold an oral hearing - that decision being at the discretion of the complaints committee - the consideration will proceed by way of written representations.
- Should the governors choose to adopt this procedure, the clerk to the governors will write to the complainant, outlining the procedure.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the Head Teacher who will then have 7 working days in which to respond.
- That response will then, in turn, be sent to the complainant for comment, any responses to be provided within 7 working days.
- Finally, that response will go to the Head Teacher who has 7 working days in which to respond to the clerk.
- A copy of the Head Teacher's final response should be sent to the complainant with the advice that it is only for their information and that any further response from the parent will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances.
- All the responses are then put before the complaints committee for consideration.
- For the avoidance of doubt, all communication should be through the clerk to the governors, neither party should send their response to the other directly.
- Regardless of which method is adopted, the complaints committee must take a robust approach and not simply endorse the decision of the Head Teacher without any consideration of the evidence.
- The complaints committee must have all the necessary evidence they feel is necessary for them to make their decision. If they are not satisfied and require further evidence from either party, they should adjourn and request that information. The complaints committee should only make their decision if they are satisfied they have sufficient evidence with which to make a final decision.
- The decision of the complaints committee should be given to the complainant in writing within 5 working days of the decision. Providing the procedures as laid down in the complaints policy are followed then there is no right of appeal following this decision.
- The decision letter should outline the nature of the complaint, the factors taken into consideration and the decision of the complaints committee. There is therefore no need for minutes to include any other information.
- Under the Data Protection Act, parents can request to have sight of all documents relating to their complaint, subject to restrictions as detailed in Section A06 of the Schools Administration handbook.

It is important that the complaint and associated papers are not attached to the child's file as they do not relate to the child. However, schools may wish to keep a central register of complaints received.

FORMAL COMPLAINT TO GOVERNORS

This action should only be taken once the Head Teacher has responded in writing to a formal complaint OR if the complaint is about the Head Teacher.



APPENDIX 3

COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS – MODEL LETTERS

Letter 1- Written Representations

(Sample letter of acknowledgement from Clerk to Governors to Complainant)

Dear

Reference: Your complaint against (Name of school)

I write to acknowledge your letter dated (insert date) and to confirm that your letter is being considered under our school complaints procedure.

The Governors' Complaints Committee will now be convened to consider your complaint and, in line with the Local Authority's guidance, their adjudication will proceed by way of written representations.

Your letter will now be forwarded to the Head Teacher, who will then have 7 working days in which to provide a response.

The Head Teacher's response will then be sent to you for your further comments, any response to be provided within 7 working days.

Finally, your further comments/response will go to the Head Teacher who has 7 working days in which to respond.

A copy of the Head Teacher's final response will be sent to you for information only. No further submissions or responses will be considered except in exceptional circumstances. All the responses will then be put before the complaints committee for consideration.

For the avoidance of doubt, all communication should be through me, as the Clerk to Governors; neither party should send responses to the other directly.

I will forward the Head Teacher's first response to you in due course.

Yours sincerely

(Clerk to Governors is the signatory)

Letter 2 - Written Representations

(Sample covering letter from Clerk to Governors to Complainant when forwarding Head Teacher's 1st response)

Dear

Reference: Your complaint against (Name of school)

I write further to my letter dated (insert date).

As detailed in my previous letter, please find enclosed a copy of the Head Teacher's response for your information and further comment.

Should you wish to submit any comments and/or provide further supporting evidence to support your complaint, you have 7 working days from the date of this letter to provide these.

Please address your envelope to the Clerk to Governors, care of the school address.

If a submission is received from you within 7 working days, then the Head Teacher will have 7 working days in which to provide a further response. If no response is received from you, then the Committee will consider your complaint based on the information submitted.

I look forward to receiving your additional comments by (enter date of 7th working day from their receipt of your letter).

Yours sincerely

(Clerk to Governors is the signatory) January 2014

Letter 3 - Written Representations

(Sample covering letter from Clerk to Governors to Complainant when forwarding Head Teacher's 2nd/final response)

Dear

Reference: Your complaint against (Name of school)

I write to acknowledge receipt of your additional comments / supporting evidence, received on (insert date).

As detailed in my previous correspondence, I now enclose a copy of the Head Teacher's final response to your additional comments. This is provided for information purposes only and no further contributions will be accepted except in the most exceptional of circumstances.

All the papers concerning your complaint will now be put before the Committee for consideration. It is anticipated the meeting will take place on /during the week commencing (insert date).

The Committee will write to inform you of the outcome of your complaint within five working days of this meeting having taken place.

Yours sincerely

(Clerk to Governors is the signatory) January 2014

Letter 4 - Written Representations

(Sample decision letter from Chair of the Governors' Complaints Committee to Complainant)

Dear

Reference: Your Complaint against (Name of School)

I write further to your letter dated 18th July 2025, which outlined in detail your complaint regarding the (Name of school).

I confirm that the Governors take any complaint extremely seriously and a complaints committee comprised of three governors was convened in order to fully consider this matter.

The Committee also wish to take this opportunity to thank both yourself and the school for providing detailed paperwork. The Committee thoroughly considered all the documentation submitted and spent some considerable time discussing your complaints before reaching a decision.

To assist with the adjudication and for the purpose of clarity for all concerned, the Committee thought it best to assess each complaint against headings broadly stipulated in your original written complaint. Where it is meaningful and helpful to do so, the complaints have been grouped under a common heading.

- (Use appropriate heading to summarise the relevant element of the complaint)
- Briefly outline this element of the complaint
- Summarise your findings in relation to this element of the complaint
- Clearly state whether this element is upheld, dismissed or upheld in part.
- Identify any recommendations for the Governing Body
- Please see the following sample:

1. Failure to address bullying

The Committee considered your complaint that the school had failed to take any action when you reported that XXX was being bullied by an older child within the school.

The Committee carefully reviewed all of the documentation relating to this issue and found that the school had taken numerous actions, both to deal with the behaviour of the perpetrator and to safeguard your child. We note that the Head Teacher met with you and provided detailed information as to the safeguarding measures, but refused to discuss the sanctions applied to the perpetrator. The Committee recognise that this has caused you considerable frustration.

Whilst the Committee would concur with the Head Teacher's view that it is not appropriate to share confidential details relating to a child for whom you have no parental responsibility, we feel that a timely assurance that sanctions had been applied in line with our behaviour policy may have provided you with the necessary confidence that matters were being dealt with appropriately.

The Committee cannot uphold your complaint that the school failed to address the bullying of your child. However, we do recommend a review of the school's practice in keeping parents informed of actions taken in response to reports of bullying.

All final decision letters must include details of a complainant's right to refer a complaint to the Department for Education)

Right of Appeal

The Committee has reached its decision after a careful and thorough consideration of all the documents associated with your complaint and this decision letter now concludes the school's internal complaints procedure. However, should you remain dissatisfied, you may refer your complaint to the School Complaints Team within the Department for Education. Referrals must be made in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Team
Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
WA7 2GJ

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school/how-to-complain-to-the-department-about-a-school>

For the Secretary of State to intervene in a matter, he would need to be sure that:

- The School has acted or proposes to act unreasonably in the exercise or performance of its functions under certain legislation
- Or, the school has failed to carry out a duty at all under certain legislation.

(Your letter should end on a positive note.)

It remains to thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention. It is important to the effective running of any school to have a process whereby parents can raise concerns in a constructive manner. Indeed, it is through such processes that potential improvements are often identified and delivered, contributing significantly to school improvements and safety for the benefit of all.

Yours sincerely

(Signatory is usually the Chair of the Complaints Committee)