



# Winster Primary School

CofE (Controlled)

## Policy Document

---

### Complaints Procedure

---

#### Summary - how we deal with complaints and concerns

Most concerns and complaints are best dealt with informally, by talking directly to your child's teacher, or the Headteacher. Staff are usually available at the end of the school day for brief discussions. If you need privacy or a longer discussion, staff will arrange an appointment at a mutually convenient time over the next few days.

Alternatively, talk to one of the school governors, who may be able to offer help or advice on what to do next.

If a problem cannot be resolved informally, there is a formal complaints procedure - the full policy is available at school. You should write (or talk) to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, stating your complaint, either in your own words or using the form available from the school clerk. A small group of governors will then meet with you and any others involved to find out the facts, and decide what to do. This will usually happen within one week of receiving your letter. If you are not satisfied with this decision, you can appeal to a second group of governors before the matter is closed.

Drafted:	6 December 2010	
Adopted by Governing Body:	18 January 2011	
Reviewed and approved:	4 March 2014	Minute number: 7/14
Reviewed and approved:	10 March 2015	Minute number: 08/14
Review date:	2016	

## **General principles**

The school will take all complaints seriously, whether made informally or formally, and will aim to resolve any complaint as soon as possible. We feel that it is best if complaints are resolved informally as far as possible, but recognise that from time to time a more formal procedure may be necessary. This document sets out the formal complaints procedures to be used when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

## **Investigating Complaints**

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator), should:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- 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;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

## **Resolving Complaints**

The outcomes of an investigation could result in 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.

## **Protracted complaints**

Despite the best efforts to resolve a complaint, all stages of the procedures having been followed, there will be occasions when the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to complain about the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

## **The Complaints Procedure**

There are 3 stages to the procedure, but as Winster CE Primary School is a small school, the complainant may need to miss out stage 1. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

- Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the

- complaint);
- Stage two: complaint heard by headteacher;
- Stage three: complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeal panel;

### **Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member**

In most cases complaints will be resolved amicably and informally at this stage. Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors should not be involved at this stage, in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

A complainant may have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complaints co-ordinator can refer the complainant to another staff member.

The person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator) should bear in mind the need to:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- 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;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

The outcomes of an investigation could result in 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.

### **Stage 2: Complaint heard by the Headteacher**

The Headteacher would normally follow the procedure as for stage 1.

### **Stage 3: Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel**

The governing body will nominate three members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and set out its terms of reference. These can include:

- drawing up its procedures;
- hearing individual appeals;
- making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

The panel may choose their own chair.

The panel should aim to respond to the complainant with a resolution within one week of receiving the complaint. However, there may be circumstances which make it impossible to meet this timescale.

### **The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel**

The 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 that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

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. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- 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. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- c. Governors should recognise that parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible.