



Live , Love , Learn and be Happy at St Nicholas Primary School

Our Values are Unity, Trust, Responsibility, Independence, Respect, courage, freedom, perseverance, appreciation, tolerance, friendship and honesty.

Complaints Procedure Policy

The Governors of St. Nicholas' School have adopted the following procedure to deal with informal and formal complaints from members of the school community or general public about appropriate matters relevant to the running of the school. The formal aspect of this procedure is to be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful.

Framework of Principles

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;
- Ensure a fair investigation by an independent person, where necessary;
- 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.

Raising an Issue or Concern/Making an Informal Complaint

Stage 1: Any issue or concern should first be raised with your child's teacher. This can be done by asking the teacher to meet with you in order that you can raise the matter.

Stage 2: If the issue or concern is not resolved at this stage, or if you do not consider it appropriate to talk to the teacher, then the issue or concern must be raised with the Team Leader (currently Sarah Dorling for Foundation Stage, Faye Lawrence for KS1, Julie Holland for Year 3 or 4 and Johanna McNulty for Year 5 or 6).

Stage 3: If the issue or concern is still unresolved, or if the Team Leader is the relevant teacher, then the issue or concern should be raised with the Headteacher.

It is believed that most concerns and issues can be resolved formally in this manner.

Making a Formal Complaint

Stage 1: Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the matter will be formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school. If the matter is about the day-to-day running of the school or the interpretation of school policies, by members of staff of the school or the actions or inactions of staff at the school, the matter should be investigated by the Headteacher or a member of Senior Staff nominated by the Headteacher. If the matter is about school policies as determined by the Governing Body or the actions or inactions of the Governing Body, then the matter should be dealt with by the Chair of Governors or a Governor nominated by the Chair.

A complainant wishing to instigate the formal procedure should be asked to complete a complaint form (Annex1). The school should offer to help an individual to complete the form and the person providing this help should be unconnected with the complaint. It is essential to report the progress of any complaint and the final outcome. It is necessary that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the designated person) makes sure that they:

- 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 the Complaint

At each stage in the procedure, schools will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or part. In addition, 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 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.

It would be useful if complainants were 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.

Stage 2: Where the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with fully and properly, they may choose to take it to the second stage. This stage will be referred to a panel of Governors established as outlined in Annex 2. The Chair of the Panel will be

elected by the Panel members and will be responsible for maintaining a further procedure as outlined in Annex 2.

Timescale

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure must have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Mediation

If, at any time, throughout the procedure from informal to the final decision of the Panel, the school feels that external mediation would help resolve the complaint, they can access consultancy advice within the School Development Service. (SDS) This procedure can only be used with the agreement of the complainant.

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.

Stage 1

Complaint is made to member of staff or Governor.
Is complainant satisfied with the informal resolution?

Yes/No

Mediation considered.

Mediation takes place within 10 working days if appropriate.

The complainant is given a copy of the complaint form and offer of support in completing it.

Form received by school. Is complaint about areas of Headteacher's or Governors' responsibility?

Headteacher deals with matter or designates senior member of staff.

Chair deals with matter or designates Governor.

Chair of Governors or Headteacher or Designated Person carries out investigation and seeks resolution and meets or speaks to complainant within 10 working days of the school receiving form.

Complainant satisfied? Yes/No

Is the complainant completely satisfied? Yes/ No

Stage 2

Complainant expresses wish to invoke Stage 2.

Complaint form passed to Clerk to Governors within 5 working days of complainant expressing wish to go to Stage 2.

Clerk sets up panel of Governors and contacts complainant with details of hearing and request for any further information.

Panel meets and makes decisions within 15 working days of Clerk receiving form.

Notes

This form can be used by any person making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative specific procedure. Complaints will most often come from parents or carers but may also come from pupils/students or members of the public, e.g. school neighbours. Anyone receiving this form should be advised verbally that help in completing it is available from the school. A member of school staff who is familiar with the process should be nominated to give help. If it is appropriate for a member of staff to look into this complaint, it should be returned to the Headteacher. If it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by a Governor, it should be returned to the Clerk of Governors at the school.

General complaints about the County Council's services should be directed to the Director of the Learning and Culture Directorate, Macclesfield House, New Road, Oxford. OX1 1NA

Annex 2

Part of management process.

Establishing a complaints panel:

- The Governing Body should agree the composition of the complaints appeals panel at the first meeting of the Governing Body each year;
- As Governors may not be available at all times it may be wise to agree the names of 4 or 5 possible Governors from whom a panel of three may be drawn;
- 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.

IF FOR ANY REASON THIS PROCEDURE CANNOT BE FOLLOWED:

The Governing Body in consultation with the LEA will put in place an alternative fair process.

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 a 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.
- 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 that the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- d) Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child is accompanied and

does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

e) The Governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Signed on behalf of Headteacher _____

Signed on behalf of Governors _____

Date: November 2015

Review Date: November 2017