
St.
Nicholas –
at – Wade
CE Primary
School

Complaints
Policy and
Procedure

Jan 2016
To be reviewed July 2020

St. Nicholas-at-Wade Church of England Primary School

Complaints Procedure and Policy

Complaints Policy

As a school, our aim is to ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, openly, honestly and objectively.

All complaints and concerns brought to the school by parents are treated with appropriate confidentiality and seriousness. They will be investigated by the school at the required level. This might be with a child's Class Teacher, with the Head Teacher or with the involvement of the school's Governing Body. Our aim is to work with parents in a fair and open manner, to bring satisfactory resolutions to concerns and make all children's educational experiences most beneficial.

Whilst recognizing that most day-to-day issues can be resolved either informally or following a brief organized meeting, this policy gives guidance as to further procedures dealing with more serious issues. It can be noted that matters very rarely pass beyond "Step One" of this policy.

Initial Informal Approach

If your child has a problem at school or you have a cause for concern you will usually be able to resolve it through a discussion with your child's teacher. Where necessary, this will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher. If you can't resolve a problem in this informal manner, the school has a formal complaints procedure that you can follow. On no occasion will a complaint penalize or prejudice a child in school.

Step One: Contact the school

Most issues regarding your child's education can be sorted out by arranging to meet with your child's class teacher. If the issue is of a more general nature, if the teacher can't help you or you are not satisfied with their response you can talk to the head teacher (or the Deputy Head teacher). You should be able to arrange a meeting with the Head teacher through normal, everyday contact, but if this is not possible you can make an appointment through the school office. If this isn't practical you may wish to make a complaint in writing to the Head Teacher.

Your problem or concern will be investigated and the Head Teacher will inform you of the outcomes either by inviting you to a meeting or by letter. If it is agreeable a telephone call could be made to explain resolutions.

Step Two: Contact the Governing Body

If your complaint is not resolved or is in actual fact a complaint concerning the Head teacher the next stage is to approach the Governing Body of the school. If you want to complain to the Governing Body this should be in writing. Once a letter is received, members of the Governing Body will decide upon any appropriate actions and response. For more serious matters the Full Governing Body will be involved.

Step Three: Contact the DFE

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Governing Body you can contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints for more details.

Staff Guidelines

Complaints will be recorded and monitored regularly by staff and Governors. Recording will begin at the point when an initial concern or complaint cannot be resolved immediately but needs some investigation and/or consultation with others in school and a subsequent report back to the parent.

Recording at the earliest stage need only be a very basic record of the complaint, giving date, name of parent and general nature of the complaint.

There needs to be clarity as to the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the Class teacher, Head Teacher, or Administrative staff, depending who is approached first. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without formality, either in person, over the telephone or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent and this must be taken into consideration.

It may be unclear at first whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

School Complaints Procedure 2016

Stage 1: The first contact

1.1 Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.

- 1.2 If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, he/she will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number of the parent.
- 1.3 All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. He/she will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.
- 1.4 If the matter is brought to the attention of the Head Teacher he/she may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage. If the complaint is against the Head Teacher the parent will be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.
- 1.5 The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.
- 1.6 Where no satisfactory solution can be found, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further they should write to the Head Teacher.

Stage 2: Referral to the Head Teacher

- 2.1 The Head Teacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint.
- 2.2 The Head Teacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet them to supplement any information provided previously. If deemed necessary, it will be made clear to the complainant that, if she/he wishes, he/she might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf.
- 2.3 If necessary the Head Teacher will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complainant centres on a pupil, the pupil will also be interviewed. Pupils will normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present, or if more appropriate, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If a member of staff is complained against they must have the opportunity to present their case.
- 2.4 The Head Teacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 2.5 Once all relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Head Teacher will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should she/he wish to take the complaint

further, he/she should notify the Chair of Governors within five weeks of receiving the letter.

- 2.6 If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, or if the Head teacher has been closely involved at Stage 1, the Chair of the Governing Body will carry out all Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- 3.1 The Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the Governing Body to review the complaint. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that three members of the school's governing body will hear the complaint within twenty days of receiving the complaint. The letter will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be sent to the three members.
- 3.2 A meeting of the Governor's Complaints panel will be convened. No Governors with prior involvement must be included on the panel and it may be necessary to use reserves (previously agreed by the Governing Body) to ensure the panel can meet within the set time. If she/he has not been previously involved the Chair should chair to panel; otherwise the Vice Chair should do so. Where it is appropriate to ensure objectivity, the Chair of the Panel will consider inviting Head Teachers or Governors from other schools to participate in the Complaints Review Panel. Governors should bear in mind the advantages of having a parent governor on the panel, and will also want to be sensitive to issues of race and gender. It is not appropriate for the Head Teacher to sit on the Panel.
- 3.3 The Chair/Vice-Chair will ensure the Panel hears the complaint within twenty working days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence relating to the complaint will be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair may prepare a thorough summary for sending to Panel members.
- 3.4 The Chair or Clerk will write and inform the complainant, Head Teacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel at least five working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification will also inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, advocate, interpreter and explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.
- 3.5 The Head Teacher will be invited to attend the Panel meeting and will be asked to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. All concerned, including the complainant, should receive any relevant documents including the Head Teacher's report at least five working days prior to the meeting. The Head Teacher may also invite members of staff

directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or in person, subject to the discretion of the Chair.

3.6 The meeting should allow for

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the Head Teacher to explain the school's response.
- The Head Teacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Head Teacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response.
- Panel members to have any opportunity to question both the complainant and the Head Teacher
- Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to approval by the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
- Final statements by both the complainant and the Head Teacher

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

3.7 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Head Teacher that the Panel will consider its decision and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Head Teacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

3.8 The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and

- Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision on the complaint
- Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

3.9 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Head Teacher. The letter to the complainant should also explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

3.10 The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

Stage 4: The complaint is sent to the Department for Education

4.1 If a complainant wishes to go beyond the Governor’s complaints panel, they should be advised to write to the DFE. The DFE will then investigate and review as appropriate.

Date presented to the Full Governing Body: July 2016

To be reviewed July 2020

Signed by Chair of Governors _____

Signed by Head Teacher _____

Appendix 1

Initial Informal Approach



