

Fakenham Junior School

Complaints

Policy and Procedure

Approved by Governors: Jan 2015
Review date Jan 2016

Signed L Cook
Headteacher

Date 13/01/15

Signed I Randall
Chair of Governors

Date 13/01/15

Fakenham Junior School

At Fakenham Junior School we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe, and to achieve. We recognise that parents, guardians or carers play an important part in making this happen. Cooperation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in the school.

Each level of our Complaints Procedure set out below offers the opportunity for concerns and complaints to be resolved fairly and as quickly as possible.

Stage 1 – Informal

Parents, carers or guardians should, in the first instance, make an appointment to speak to the class teacher about their concern. An appointment to discuss the issue will be offered as quickly as possible, as this will give both parties time to talk about it calmly and politely without being interrupted. It is best to resolve issues at this point.

- If the complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff the Office Manager may refer the complainant to another staff member.
 - Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Office Manager will refer the complainant to the Chair of Governors.
 - Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Office Manager may consider referring the complainant to another staff member.
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Stage 2 – Formal - Complaint to the Headteacher

An issue that has not been resolved through the informal Stage 1 should move on to Stage 2.

Parents or carers wishing to move to Stage 2 must write a formal letter of complaint or complete the Complaint Form at Annex 1 and send it to the Headteacher. The letter/form will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent, carer or guardian considers the issue to be unresolved.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and then, following an investigation into the complaint, discuss a resolution with the complainant. The Headteacher aims to offer a resolution to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of receipt of the letter.

If everyone involved is unable to resolve the issue then it may be necessary to ask for information or support from a Children's Services Representative. (The issue that is the focus of the complaint will determine the person contacted. The Headteacher, member of the leadership team or Deputy Headteacher should know who to ring or the Customer

Service Centre will be able to offer information on 0844 800 8001 or e-mail:information@norfolk.gov.uk).

Level 3 – Formal - Complaint letter to Chair of Governor

If parents, carers or guardians feel that their complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2 by the Headteacher they may escalate the complaint to be heard by the Chair of Governors. A formal letter of complaint should be written to the Chair of Governors, within 7 days of the resolution letter date from the Headteacher. The letter to the Chair of Governors will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent, carer or guardian considers the issue to be unresolved.

The Chair of Governor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing and then, following an investigation into the complaint, discuss a resolution with the complainant. The Chair of Governors aims to offer a resolution to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint letter. The letter will also offer an escalation to Stage 4, Governors' Complaint Appeal Panel, if the complaint remains unresolved at this stage.

Level 4 – Formal – Complaint to be heard by a Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel

Complainants wishing to move to Level 4 of the formal complaints procedure should write a letter to the Clerk to the Governors to request that a Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel meets to hear the complaint. This formal complaint letter must be received within 10 school days of the resolution letter from the Chair of Governors. The letter will need to set out the complaint that has previously been formally discussed with the Chair of Governors and detail why the complainant feels the matter is not resolved.

The Chair will convene a Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel.

Complainants should understand that the Governors' Complaints Appeal Hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Before the meeting:

The Chair of Governors should appoint a clerk to the Governors' Complaints Panel, acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of receipt and arrange for a panel of governors to meet within 15 school days of receipt. It must be recognised that if the letter is received within 14 school days to the end of term it may not be possible to organise the governors' panel meeting. In this case the matter should be dealt with within 10 school days of the school reopening.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors should be given a copy of the complainant's letter and written documentation should be requested from the school. The clerk should send both the complainant's letter and the school documentation to the Governors' Complaints Panel members, complainant, Headteacher and Chair of Governors (and anyone else involved in the meeting) at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The complainant, the Chair of Governor and the Headteacher will be invited to attend the Governor's Complaints Appeal Panel meeting to give a verbal statement in support of their documentation. Each of them can bring someone to support them if they wish.

At the meeting:

The complainant and the Chair of Governors/Headteacher (or her/his representative) should provide all the relevant information they wish and the Governors' Complaints Panel members should clarify any points. After the complainant and Headteacher (or her/his representative) have provided all the information they wish, the Chair of the Panel will ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk.

The remit of the Governors' 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.

After the meeting: Notification of the panel's decision

The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, within 10 school days, with the panel's response (including the reasons for the decision).

The decision of the Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel is final.

The role of the Department for Education

If a complaint has exhausted the school procedures the School Complaints Unit (SCU) at the Department for Education will examine if the school's complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. SCU also examines policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, SCU will report them to the school and the complainant and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken. Failure to carry out remedial actions could ultimately result in a formal Direction being issued by the Secretary of State.

Complainants should write to The (SCU) at:
Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD

Annex 1 - Complaint Form – for use from Stage 2 - Formal

Please complete and return to the School Office Manager who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already 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

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Flowchart of procedure for handling concerns and complaints:

