



St White's Primary School

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Date of Review: September 2017

Date of Next Review: September 2019

Signed, Chair of Governors:

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1. Introduction - St White's School Concerns and Complaints Policy

- 1.1** St White's Primary School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. Parents can expect any complaint to be treated by the school with the utmost care and consideration, in accordance with this Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 1.2** This Concerns and Complaints Policy has been drafted having regard to the Best Practice Advice for School's Complaints Procedures (Departmental advice for maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and local Authorities (January 2016), which refers to Section 29 of the Education Act 2002.
- 1.3** The majority of issues raised by parents or carers are concerns rather than complaints. The School is committed to taking any concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, with the intention of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without recourse to formal procedures.
- 1.4** However, in those instances where a parent or carer does not feel a concern has been addressed, or it is of sufficient gravity, the School's Concerns and Complaints Policy will be used. The prime aim of the School's Concerns and Complaints Policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.
- 1.5** In the event of the school receiving anonymous letters, the school cannot investigate, consider or address them. No action will be taken nor will the letters be presented to Governors. Furthermore, there is no national guidance on investigating complaints against Governors and therefore no requirements for investigating anonymous complaints relating to governors.
- 1.6** Complaints relating to Staff or Governors private and personal history or conduct outside of school, in a private capacity, do not fall within the remit of the school complaint policy and will not be dealt with by the school unless it directly affects the safeguarding of children at St White's.
- 1.7** All complaints will be investigated by an appropriate person decided by the school; this may be a teacher, a senior member of staff, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 1.8** Comments, concerns or complaints should be raised as soon as possible. They will be dealt with:
- Fairly, thoroughly and promptly
 - Efficiently and helpfully

Outcomes could include:

- No Further Action

- An explanation or clarification from either party
- An assurance, where appropriate, that the same thing will not happen again
- Action to put things right

St Whites' School Statement of Concerns and Complaints Procedures

General Principles:

- This procedure for is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding Members of Staff

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

- Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher. This would normally be done by speaking to them but could also be done by telephone or in writing.
- All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally.
- Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most concerns or complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand all aspects of the concern.

In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. A Complaint Form is provided to assist you (Appendix 1).
- You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.
- It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.
- Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the Head Teacher.

- The Head Teacher may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to seek an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.
- It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Head Teacher. If not arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.
- Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.
- If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the Chair of Governors reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.
- You will find useful information on how to make a complaint by referring to Gloucestershire County Council's complaints procedures. This is available by following this link: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-schools/>

Stage 3 – Referral to Chair of Governors

- If your concern or complaint is not resolved at Stage 2, you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of Governors, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. A Complaint Form is provided to assist you (Appendix 1).
- You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.
- It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.
- Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the Chair of Governors or via the website.
- The Chair of Governors will make arrangements for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. You should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the Chair of Governors intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

- Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.
- The member of staff will be informed that the complaint has become formal.
- If you are not satisfied with the way in which the process has been followed, you may request a complaint panel hearing to review the process followed by the school and Chair of Governors in handling the complaint.
- Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.

Stage 4 –Complaint Panel Hearing

- Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.
- The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.
- The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant.
- The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the Head Teacher and/or the Chair of the governing body panel that has considered the matter), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.
- The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.
- You, and the school representative[s], will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting.
- The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.
- If you believe that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then you may make representations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Secretary of State, Department of Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Headteacher

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

- Most concerns and complaints regarding the Headteacher can be sorted out quickly by speaking to them directly but could also be done by telephone or in writing.
- The Headteacher will make every effort to resolve your problem informally.
- Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most concerns or complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. Of course, this does not mean that in every case

they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand all aspects of the concern.

In the case of serious concerns regarding the Headteacher, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of Governors, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. A Complaint Form is provided to assist you (Appendix 1).
- You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.
- It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.
- Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the Chair of Governors, or via the web site.
- The Chair of Governors will make arrangements for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. You should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the Chair of Governors intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.
- Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.
- The Headteacher will be informed that the complaint has become formal.
- If you are not satisfied with the way in which the process has been followed, you may request a complaint panel hearing to review the process followed by the school and Chair of Governors in handling the complaint.
- Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.

Stage 3 – Complaint Panel Hearing

- If your concern or complaint is not resolved at Stage 2, you must request a complaint panel hearing to review the process followed by the school and Chair of Governors in handling the complaint.
- You should include details of why you are not satisfied with how the complaints process has been followed by the Chair of Governors.

- Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the clerk to Governors.
- Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.
- The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.
- The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant.
- The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the Chair of the governing body panel that has considered the matter and/or other members of staff), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.
- The Headteacher will be invited to attend the panel and is entitled to representation by a colleague or union representative.
- The panel will also have access to the records kept of the process followed.
- You, and the school representative[s], will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting.
- The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.
- If you believe that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then you may make representations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Secretary of State, Department of Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

2. Further action

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. Complaints about school problems are usually settled within schools but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to The Department for Education SCU (see below).

School Complaints Unit
Secretary of State
Department of Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

The SCU will examine the complaints policy and any other relevant policies.

3. Vexatious complainants

There may be rare occasions when the complainant is deemed to be "vexatious". This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint, or that a complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issues.

Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the head teacher and Chair of Governors reserve the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be

"vexatious", and to determine that the matter is now concluded. It is vital that full notes of the reasons for this are made.

APPENDIX 1

School Complaints Form