

Lingfield Primary School COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 Informal Stage – Complaint heard by staff member

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff and **governors** are made aware of the procedures, they will know what to do when they receive a complaint.

It would assist the procedure if the school respected the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases it is useful if another member of staff can hear the complainant. Where the complaint concerns the Head Teacher the complainant is referred to the chair of governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complaint could be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

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 of the procedure. Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

The Head Teacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school and resolved the complaint at this stage. If though the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found the parent will be asked if they wish the complaint to be considered formally at stage two of this procedure.

If wishing to proceed with the complaint, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Head Teacher or chair of governors using the form attached at Appendix 7. The form should be sent to the Head Teacher or chair of governors within ten school days. Advice on how to complete the form may be requested from Governor Development Service 201986.

Stage Two – Complaint heard by Head Teacher or Chair of Governors

Where the Head Teacher has addressed the complaint at stage one, the chair of governors will become involved at this stage. Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at stage one, the Head Teacher will hear this stage.

The chair of governors or Head Teacher will acknowledge the written complaint within **five school days** of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the parent to discuss the complaint. At this point the chair of governors and Head Teacher may still seek to resolve the complaint informally.

The chair of governors or Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within **ten school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the chair of governors or Head Teacher and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.

Stage Three – Complaint Heard by Governing Body’s Complaints Committee

If the parent still remains dissatisfied, they will be advised that a meeting of the governors complaints committee will be convened. The governors’ complaints committee is the last school-based stage of the complaints processes, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any committee set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

As the chair of governors may be involved at an earlier stage in the procedure (particularly where the complaint is about the Head Teacher) it may be wise not to include the Chair as a member of the committee to avoid any possible reference to the chair being “impartial”.

The Head Teacher would be expected to attend the hearing to give evidence and may also choose to invite staff to attend who had been directly involved in matters raised by the complainant (Subject to the approval of the Chair of the Complaints Committee).

The Complaints Committee should consist of three members of the governing body identified by the chair/clerk and is subject to individual availability. The committee may choose their own chair. No governor may sit on the committee if they have had any prior involvement in the complaint or circumstances surrounding. In some cases it may be appropriate to have independent governors from other governing bodies hear the complaint to ensure openness and transparency.

Complaint Form

If you are not satisfied or feel that you have been unfairly treated, we would like you to indicate the problem.

It is however very important that you seek to resolve any difficulties in the first instance by discussing your concerns/complaint with a member of staff at school.

If you have tried this and are still not satisfied with the response then please fill in all the sections of this form and return it to the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors.

Your Name:

Child's Name Class/Group

Your Address:

Contact Details:.....(mobile) (home)
.....(work)

Details of Complaint:
(Please be as specific as possible, e.g. giving dates, who was involved and where etc)

Please attach a continuation sheet/additional information if you wish

When did you report the problem to the school?

To whom at the school did you report the problem?

What was the response?

Have you complained to the school about this before? Yes/No *(delete as appropriate)

If so, to whom, and when?

What would you like to see done to resolve your complaint and bring the matter to an acceptable closure for yourself and the school?

Signed Date

.....
(Parent/Guardian)