

WELLSPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY



Status

Statutory



Purpose

The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and others who have a stake in the school. The governing body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self improvement and raising standards. Pupils, parents, carers or other adults who have concerns or complaints should feel that they can be voiced and will be considered seriously.

Framework of Principles

Our complaints procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- Be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- 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 full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;

- Respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- Provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

The content of this policy has been recommended for approval by Somerset Children and Young People's Services and should be read and used in conjunction with all other school policies approved by the governing body.

General Principles

Initial concerns

We should be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Informal concerns, taken seriously at the earliest stage, will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. In most cases classroom teachers will receive the first approach and it would therefore be beneficial if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary, so that concerns do not develop into formal complaints.

Formal procedures should only be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will ensure 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;
- Consider interviewing those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind;
- Keep notes of any interviews.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure we 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 in 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 the 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.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

We will try to identify areas of agreement between the parties. We will also try to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, our complaints procedure is expected to limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Time-Limits

Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. The complainant will be informed about the expected time scales associated with dealing with the complaint. Where further investigations are necessary, the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Formal complaints Procedure

There are three stages to our formal complaints procedure:

- Stage one – complaint heard by the headteacher, or a member of staff.
- Stage two – complaint heard by the chair of governors, or the headteacher
- Stage three – complaint heard by the governing body’s complaints panel

There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the headteacher after a meeting with the complainant.

Complaints about the headteacher will be dealt with initially by the chair of governors. An unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage. The complaints procedure can be found following this policy guidance –

Annex B.

Managing and Recording Complaints

Recording Complaints

We recognise that it is useful for us to record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. Our complaint form can be found in **Annex A**. At the end of a meeting, or telephone call, the member of staff involved will try to ensure that the complainant and the

school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to our school improvement. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating our school's performance. We can monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of our procedure making changes where necessary. Complaint information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals.

Publicising the procedure

There is a legal requirement for the complaints procedure to be publicised. As a governing body we include details of our procedure in:

- Information given to new parents when their children join the school;
- On our website

The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring that all existing and new staff are aware of this policy and procedure – and their roles and responsibilities in implementing it.

Review and approval of this policy is normally delegated to the Business Committee of the Governing Body in accordance with its terms of reference.

On this occasion, however, the policy was reviewed and approved by the full Governing Body because of major changes in content and the time scale before implementation in the school.

Date approved by the Governing Body – July 2015

Date for implementation: September 2015

Date reviewed by the GB: July 2021

Date reviewed by the GB: July 2022

Date reviewed by the GB: July 2023

Date for next review by the GB: July 2024

Annex A

**Wellsprings Primary School
Complaints Procedure Form**

Your Name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime 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:

--

School use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

--

Flowchart for policy Annex B Summary of Dealing with Concerns and Complaints

It is important to recognise the difference between a concern and a complaint. Usually by taking an informal concern seriously you can prevent it becoming a formal complaint.

