



Greatham
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
+
Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Initial concerns

The school recognises the importance of resolving concerns at the earliest possible stage. The initial response by the school is crucial and can prevent escalations, therefore telling us of your concern as soon as possible is necessary. The school welcomes any suggestions for improvement.

A 'concern' may be defined as *"an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurance is sought."*

Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to invoke the formal complaints procedure and the school make every effort to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

Staff are aware of the procedures so they know what to do when they receive a concern.

In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the extended school provision is the first point of call. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher or the appropriate member of staff. All staff will make every effort to resolve your concern informally.

Formal complaint procedure

If initial attempts to resolve the concern are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, a formal complaint can be made to the Deputy Headteacher or the Headteacher.

A complaint may be defined as *"an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions the action or inaction of the school."*

Complaint Procedure Principles

Our procedures are intended to:

- Encourage informal resolution of problems wherever possible
- be impartial

- allow quick handling with time limits set 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 of complaint and provide an effective response
- provide information to the senior leadership team so that services can be improved where appropriate.

Who Can Make Complaints?

Parents, carers, guardians and pupils can make complaints following the stages outlined below.

Time Limits for Complaints

We would hope concerns or complaints are raised straight away so they can be resolved. However, if this is not the case school do not have to consider a concern or complaint made more than 3 months from the date any grounds for the concern or complaint arose.

If a parent, carer or guardian has a concern or complaint; they should not approach Governors. If a parent, carer or guardian does approach a governor, the response from the governor must be to follow the complaints procedure. No discussion must take place about the nature of the concern or complaint with the governor. This is to safeguard all information and people involved along with ensuring there is no prior knowledge of the complaint in the event of escalation to stage four of the complaints procedure.

Investigating Complaints

When investigating a complaint the Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher or delegated staff member will:

- 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
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of the interview/discussions

Resolving Complaints

Throughout the procedure the person investigating will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved.

The complainant will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the complaint at any stage.

We will endeavour to:

- rectify any issues as quickly as possible
- identify areas of agreement between the parties
- clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred.

A positive relationship is encouraged in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

The school acknowledges that there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue or with minor differences, the Chair of Governors will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the same matter or with minor differences is still pursued by the complainant, then the school has no obligation to acknowledge receipt or respond to any correspondence. The school will recognise this as being unreasonably persistent and take no further action.

The Stages of Formal Complaints

Our complaints procedure has four stages although, in some cases, it may be appropriate to go straight to stage two.

- Stage one: complaint considered by staff member.
- Stage two: complaint considered by the Deputy Headteacher, Headteacher or someone else the Headteacher considers is both suitable and impartial to investigate the complaint
- Stage three: complaint considered by Chair of Governors or someone else the Chair of Governors considers is both suitable and impartial to investigate the complaint from the school's governing body.
- Stage four: complaint heard by the School's Governing Body appeal panel

If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff or a member of staff considers matters could be compromised with their particular involvement at this stage, the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher will allocate another staff member. This may be the Deputy headteacher or Headteacher .

Upon full completion of each stage of the complaints procedure, a complainant, who remains dissatisfied, can progress their complaint onto the next stage.

Stage One

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint can be resolved satisfactorily or may escalate further.

A meeting will be arranged between the teacher or member of staff who is dealing with the complaint and the complainant. The complainant can bring someone to support them if they wish. This meeting will be held within 10 school days of receiving the complaint. If the complaint is received 5 school days before the end of term, the meeting may take place within 10 school days of the start of the new term. Exceptional circumstances may occasionally prevent this happening and the school will work with the family to ensure the meeting is at a mutually agreeable time.

The member of staff dealing with the complaint should make sure that the complainant is clear as to what action (if any) has been agreed. This will be clarified in writing, making a note of the concerns/complaint raised, what was discussed and the outcome. The complainant will receive a copy of this.

Stage Two

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage One, they can progress their complaint to Stage Two within 10 school days of the written outcome from Stage One. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of stage one, the complainant should write to the Headteacher to request that their complaint is considered further.

A meeting will be arranged between the complainant and the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher. The complainant can bring someone to support them if they wish. This meeting will be held within 10 school days of receiving the complaint. If the complaint is received 5 school days before the end of term, the meeting may take place within 10 school days of the start of the new term. Exceptional circumstances may occasionally prevent this happening and the school will work with the family to ensure the meeting is at a mutually agreeable time.

They will conduct a full investigation of the complaint which may include reviewing records and information and they may interview any members of staff or pupils involved.

A response to the complaint will be sent in writing. It is anticipated this will be sent within 10 school days following the completion of the investigation. This may be 10 school days after the commencement of a new school term.

Where a complaint specifically concerns the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher will refer the complainant to the chair of governors. The Chair of Governors should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of receipt. It is anticipated this will be sent within 10 school days following the completion of the

investigation. This may be 10 school days after the commencement of a new school term.

Stage Three

If the complainant remains dissatisfied the outcome at Stage Two, they can progress their complaint to Stage Three within 10 school days of the Stage Two being sent. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of stage two, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response at stage two, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further.

A meeting will be arranged between the complainant and the Chair of Governors (or someone else the Chair of Governors considers is both suitable and impartial to investigate the complaint from the school's governing body). The complainant can bring to someone to support them if they wish. This meeting will be held within 10 school days of receiving the complaint. If the complaint is received 5 school days before the end of term, the meeting may take place within 10 school days of the start of the new term. Exceptional circumstances may occasionally prevent this happening and the school will work with the family to ensure the meeting is at a mutually agreeable time.

They will conduct a full investigation of the complaint which may include reviewing records and information and they may interview any members of staff or pupils involved.

A response to the complaint will be sent in writing. It is anticipated this will be sent within 10 school days following the completion of the investigation. This may be 10 school days after the commencement of a new school term.

Stage Four

If the complainant remains dissatisfied the outcome at Stage Three, they can progress their complaint to Stage Four within 10 school days of Stage Three being sent.

Before the meeting:

- Members of the Governors' Complaints Panel should have no prior knowledge of the complaint. This may affect staff governors being members of the panel.

At the meeting:

- The Complaints Panel must be made up of at least three members of the school's governing body (including the Chair) and a clerk.
- Although this is a formal meeting, every effort should be made to make it as informal as possible for all concerned.
- Everyone attending should be in the room at the same time.
- Consideration may need to be given to the seating arrangements to make everyone feel equal and comfortable.
- The clerk should take notes of the meeting, listing who is present:

Governors, stating who is the Chair of the Governors'
Complaints Panel

Head of Schools or Executive Headteacher (or his/her
representative) and any other members of school staff

Parents and anyone accompanying them e.g. friend

Clerk

- The chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel should open the meeting stating the purpose and the format of the meeting to clarify this to all in attendance.
- People present should introduce themselves stating their reason for being at the meeting.
- The chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel should clarify with the complainant the areas of complaint that remain unresolved, why the complainant believes these areas are unresolved and what outcomes the complainant believes would resolve the matter. The Governors' Complaints Panel members should ask questions of all parties to make sure they hear the views of both the complainant and the Chair of Governors (or his representative) to be able to reach decisions on each area of complaint.
- The members of the Governors' Complaints Panel should make sure they fully understand the issues and ask any further questions to clarify any points that are still not clear to them.
- The chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel must ask the complainant and the Chair of Governors (or his representative) if they are satisfied that they have provided all the information they wanted or if there is something they wish to add and if they feel they have had a fair hearing.
- When the Governors' Complaints Panel members understand all the issues, the chair will ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk.

After the meeting:

- The Governors' Complaints Panel members then discuss the issues in private and the clerk remains to record the decision.

- The Panel members will need to consider the information, come to a decision and make any suggestions for resolution taking into account the best interests of the child or children.
- When the Panel have reached a decision the Clerk will inform everyone concerned in writing as soon as possible, but in any event, within 10 school days of the panel meeting.

Any complaints concerning the conduct of school staff will be handled in accordance with the schools internal disciplinary procedures. The details of such an investigation will remain confidential.

Who to appeal to next

Once a Governor's Complaints Panel has heard a complaint and the outcome has been sent to the complainant, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education at The School Complaints Unit, Department of Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester, M1 2WD.

Managing and Recording Complaints

Records will be kept when concerns and complaints are made. Such records could include brief notes of meetings, telephone calls, all correspondence connected with the complaint and any records gathered as part of an investigation. Records will be kept for 6 years from the date of the final piece of communication with the complainant.

Governing Body Review

The Governing Body can monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Body can be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

Publicising the Procedure

We acknowledge that there is a legal requirement in the Education Act 2002 for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. The Governing Body have established procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school.

SEND

The governing body of Greatham Church of England Primary School will make every effort to ensure that anyone who wishes to make a complaint, including a complaint in relation to children and young people with SEND, whether they have EHC plans or not, is treated fairly, given the chance to state their case, provided with a written response (including the rationale for any decisions) and informed of their appeal rights. If the complainant remains concerned after following the local complaints procedure, he or she could ask the Department for Education's School Complaints Unit to take up the matter.

Agreed: November 2017
Review: November 2019