



Complaints Policy & Procedure

Date Ratified: December 2015

Review Date: December 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Our mission is to provide the highest possible standard of all round education for each and every child, within a caring environment, in partnership with parents and the wider community.

1.2 We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that the Head Teacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. The school actively encourages parents to give us feedback on any issues that are of concern to them.

1.3 This document sets out the schools' policy statement and procedure for dealing with complaints. Please note that this procedure does not apply to issues concerning the curriculum, collective worship, admissions, exclusion appeals, decisions about your child's special education needs or grievances by school staff or racial harassment. These are the subjects of separate complaints procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained from the school upon request.

1.4 All other complaints are dealt with according to the procedure set out below. We endeavour to resolve all complaints as quickly as possible.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and endeavour to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and in all cases we put the interests of the children above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved. We would stress that we wish to resolve all complaints informally wherever possible. We consider all complaints as a learning opportunity for the school to improve their care of pupils, their policies and procedures as well as systems for dealing with complaints.

3. Monitoring and review

3.1 The governors will monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly; this will be by way of verbal and or written updates at governing body meetings, a minimum time of 3 per year. The Head Teacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records actions agreed and their implementations. These actions are reviewed following a maximum six month time period.

3.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Communication

3.3 This complaints procedure will be communicated in a variety of ways to staff and parents. For example: Newsletter, Website, copy available in reception, posted in the staff rooms, school notice boards, induction/starter packs.

Assumptions:

1. The school will appoint an internal Complaints Co-ordinator, with designated responsibility, to assist the communication in the complaints procedure.
2. It is important that this policy in no way leads to victimisation or harassment of any sort to the complainant at any stage after the complaint has been logged.

N.B. Please refer to the model policy & procedures produced by Harrow Local Education Authority and the DfE(DfE school complaints toolkit 2014).

Pinner Park Junior School Complaints Procedure

The school follows Harrow Council's complaints policy. Copies are available on the Harrow Council website or as a leaflet from the school office. This document sets out in more detail the process to be followed in school. Where it has not been possible for a parent or other complainant to resolve a problem in discussion with the class teacher they should follow the hierarchy:

1. Year Group Leader
2. Assistant or Deputy Head Teacher
3. Head Teacher

This will be informal in the first instance and move to the formal procedure below if not rectified.

No written complaint will be considered by the school unless the letter or communication is signed by a named person(s). Only in very exceptional circumstances will such a complaint be looked at if deemed appropriate taking into account the nature of the complaint.

The Governing Body of Pinner Park Junior School has agreed the following procedure for investigation of formal written or verbal complaints.

Head Teacher investigation

1. A complaint will be investigated and reported upon following the 10 working day timescale.
2. The Head Teacher (or Deputy Head if action is delegated to them) will take action as soon as possible after being notified of a complaint. The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will contact or meet the complainant if further clarification or information is needed and to ask what they feel would put things right .
3. Investigation of the complaint will be completed as quickly as possible but delays can occur due to staff absences, school holidays etc so some patience may be required. The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. The interviews will be conducted impartially and notes taken and copied to the person being interviewed. Pupils will be interviewed only when the complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant it and there are no adult witnesses available. Discretion is required in deciding whether to interview children because particular care must be taken not to lead them in answering questions.
4. A summary of the process followed and the outcome of the investigation should be given to both the complainant and the member of staff against whom the complaint has been made. It is important not to reveal details about the member of staff which are confidential or could make it difficult for them to remain in post.
5. Recommendations for improvement arising from the investigation should be shared with all parties. If disciplinary action is considered necessary this will be a matter for the school and parents will not be involved.

Formal Complaint to Chair of Governors

1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the formal school hierarchy procedure outlined above they can write to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will review the investigation process undertaken to ensure that the above procedure has

been followed. They will also review evidence gathered by the investigator to assess whether the staff complained of have acted in accordance with relevant policies and procedures and the decisions reached by the investigator are reasonable.

2. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, normally within 5 working days. The Chair of Governors may meet the complainant to ask for further information and/or clarify what could be done to put matters right. They may gather further evidence by speaking to witnesses and others who may have relevant information.
3. The Chair will present a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence collected to the Head Teacher, giving 5-10 working days to consider the material before meeting the Chair to present written and oral evidence in response.
4. The Chair will reach a decision and inform the complainant and the Head Teacher of the outcome in writing. Details of action taken in respect of any member of staff will not be given.
5. The Chair will aim to complete the investigation within as short a timescale as possible but it may take some months in the event of school holidays, staff absences or gathering material from local or national authorities. Where the investigation cannot be completed within 6 weeks the complainant will be notified of the delay and expected completion date.

Referral to Governing Body Complaint Panel

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the way in which the complaint process has been followed by the Chair or considers that the decision is perverse then they may ask a panel of governors to review the complaint. This request must be made in writing to the Chair within 10 working days from the previous decision.
2. The Chair will ask 3 members of the Governing Body who have no previous involvement in the case to convene a Complaint Panel. Consideration must be given to diversity in the make-up of the panel.
3. The Panel Chair will invite the complainant to state their complaint in writing to the panel within 5-10 days. The Panel will then check that the previous stage of the formal complaints procedure (the Chair's investigation) has been completed i.e. that all key points in the complaint have been addressed. This must be carried out before the Panel can convene, as their role is to review what has been done previously rather than to re-investigate the complaint. If the Panel find any gaps the complaint must be referred back to the Chair for further action. If numbers allow the Chair can delegate the task to another governor but 6 members of the Governing Body must remain uninvolved to allow for 3 members of a Complaint Panel and 3 for a Disciplinary Panel in case such action is required.
4. The Complaint Panel review will be held in private and normally be conducted through consideration of written evidence but reasonable requests to address the Panel in person will be treated sympathetically. The review meeting(s) must be clerked, ideally by a local authority minute taker. In the rare event that the Panel considers an open hearing necessary the DFE remit of the complaints appeal panel (from DFE school complaints toolkit 2014) will be used as guidance.
5. The Panel will consider written evidence from the complainant within 10 working days of receipt. The Panel Chair will invite the Head Teacher, or Chair, as appropriate, to make a written response to the complaint within 10 working days. (These deadlines will be

extended if they cross into school holidays which are not working days for schools.) The response may be sent to the complainant but supporting evidence should not be included.

6. The Panel will meet to review both submissions plus records of the investigation process followed, including notes of interviews. If the Panel require clarification or believe that further evidence could be gathered they will request that the information is provided by the relevant person verbally or in writing within 10 working days. (This may be longer where information is required from external authorities). If the complainant wishes to address the Panel in person a hearing may be arranged so that all verbal evidence can be heard on the same evening.
7. Panel members will keep an open mind in considering the submissions and evidence. Their remit will be to decide whether the Chair of Governor's and other investigator(s) followed the procedure set out in this document and whether they did so with care, reaching a reasonable decision. They will also consider whether any staff complained against followed the school's policies and procedures, acted reasonably and achieved an appropriate outcome.
8. The Panel Chair will notify both parties of the decision in writing within 5 working days.
The Panel can:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or part
 - uphold the complaint in whole or part
 - decide on a course of action to resolve the complaint
 - recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to avoid problems in the future.
9. The Panel will treat their review as a learning opportunity looking to improve the way things are done in school. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.
10. The letter to the complainant should advise them that if they believe the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint they can raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Education.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Date: