Complaints Procedure
Policy

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Woodlands Park Primary School
A place for everyone. Together we are inspired to grow, learn and achieve.
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stages One and Two

The Complaints Procedure is available to all parents and staff members.

On receiving a complaint from either a parent or member of staff encouragement should be given to resolve the problem informally by discussion and if necessary apologizing. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is important.

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.

The view of a complainant should be respected if he/she is having difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. If this is the case, the matter must immediately be referred to the Head teacher or a member of the Senior Management team. If the complaint is about the Head teacher the Chair of Governors should be notified straight away.

Similarly if a member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, then the Head teacher or a member of the Senior Management team should immediately be notified.

If it is not possible for the person first hearing the complaint to settle the matter, the complaint will be referred to the Head teacher or a member of the Senior Management team.

If the first approach is made to a Governor they should immediately contact the Head teacher or a member of the Senior Management team.

When a complaint is received it is necessary to establish what has happened so far and who is involved. Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved. The complainant should be met or contacted as soon as possible, to establish what the complainant feels would put things right. Please see Appendix 1 for time scales. Those involved should be interviewed, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. Interviews should be conducted with an open mind and notes taken.
At each stage ways in which a complaint can be resolved should be sought:

- 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 the light of the complaint.

Encourage complainants to state what action they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the School could have handled the situation better will not be an admission of negligence. An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

All complaints will be acknowledged in writing with the outcome of the investigation.

**Stages Three and Four: Complaints Panel**

Every attempt should be made to settle the complaint verbally to the complainant’s satisfaction. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the head teacher or the complaint is about the head teacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further. One investigated by the Chair of Governors, if a satisfactory outcome is still not reached, the complainant can write to the Clerk to the Governors and ask that it is put before the Appeal Panel.

The remit of the Panel is to

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the School’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The Chairman will convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel, which will be clerked.
The Clerk will be the contact point of the complainant and set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible. Written material will be collated and sent to all parties in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will meet and welcome parties as they arrive at the hearing, record proceedings and notify all parties of the Panel’s decision.

The Chairman of the Panel will ensure the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption. Ensure all issues are addressed, key findings of the facts are made and parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing will be put at ease. The hearing will be conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy. The Panel will be open-minded and act independently. No member of the Panel will have a vested interest in the outcome of the proceeding, nor any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

The Panel will take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The Head teacher will explain the School’s action and be followed by the School’s witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Head teacher is invited to sum up the School’s action and response to the complaint.
- The Chairman explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within a set time scale.
- Both parties leave together while the Panel decides the issues.

Extra care will be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The Panel will need to be aware of the views of the child and given them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child’s parent is the complainant, it will be helpful to give
the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child will need to attend.

Confidentially will be retained at all times. Complaints will be investigated fully and fairly with complainants being kept informed of progress.

All points of the issue will be addressed with an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary. The Head teacher and Governors will ensure that the outcome of a complaint will be used to improve the running of the School.

Final Stage
The final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education. Complainants should be advised to write to The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at:
Department For Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester, M1 2WD

Recording of Complaints
All complaints will be recorded however received and retained by the Head teacher.

It should be ensured that the complainant and the School have the same understanding of the matter.

The Governing Body should regularly review the level and nature of complaints and the outcomes to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure. Complaints reported to the Governing Body should not name individuals.

A copy of the form to be completed for a complaint is attached. Appendix 2

Appendix 1: Flowchart
Appendix 2: Complaint Record Form

October 2013
Amended December 2015
Reviewed September 2018