

Westfield Community Primary School Complaints Policy

We value feedback as a means to improve our school and make it the best it can be. We very much hope that you and your child will be very happy at our school, and that any concerns that may arise are dealt with swiftly by our staff.

This policy sets out what the school will do if you wish to raise a concern informally, or make a formal complaint. We recognise that there may be an occasion when you are not entirely happy with an aspect of the service that we provide, and that you want the school to deal with your concern through a more formal process.

General Principles:

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

Raising a concern or complaint

Informal Stage - Concern

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be at the end of the school day, after the children have been released, by a written request or via the school office, to arrange a meeting. Many concerns can be solved by clarification and it is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved at this informal stage.

If, having spoken to the member of staff concerned, the issue has still not been resolved; parents/carers may telephone the school office to make an appointment to speak with a Phase leader or Deputy Headteacher. A senior member of staff is available each morning, alongside the Pupil Mentor, between 8.40am and 9.00am in the School Care Club at our Pastoral Care Session.

It may be appropriate to address concerns directly to the Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors, if the concern is about the Headteacher).

It should be noted that some outcomes of a concern or complaint may lead to action being initiated under other formal procedures, such as safeguarding or disciplinary matters. Where this is the case you will be advised and informed of the procedures that are to be followed. However, the school will not necessarily be able to provide you with the details of the outcome of those procedures for data protection reasons or otherwise, depending on the circumstances.

Formal Stage - Complaint

Step 1: The Headteacher

- When initial, informal attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful, the Headteacher will seek to investigate your complaint as well as attempting to resolve the matter, which may involve having a discussion/meeting with you.

Step 2: The Board of Governors

- If attempts to settle the complaint have failed, the Headteacher will supply the complainant with the name of the Chair of Governors and a copy of the complaint form.
- The Chair of Governors will need to consider whether it is appropriate for him/herself to investigate the complaint, or whether to refer it to a Complaints Committee of the Governing Board to undertake a review. If the latter course of action is followed, the Chair will convene a meeting of the complaints committee.
- The Chair should write to the complainant following investigation into the complaint. If it is to be referred to a complaints committee, then a letter should be sent giving an explanation of what will happen next, timescales involved, and the name of the person they will next hear about the progress of the investigation.
- The complaint should be set out in writing and should be submitted to the Chair of the Governors. This letter should make clear exactly what the complaint is, what action/s have already been undertaken,

and how you wish for the problem to be resolved. The complainant is entitled to make an oral presentation to supplement the written complaint to the Governor Committee via the Chair of the Committee. The purpose of this presentation will be to enable the complainant to bring out more fully the nature and detail of the complaint, so as to enable the investigation to proceed. The purpose is not to enable a response to the complaint to be made at this stage.

- At any interview in connection with the complaint the complainant may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend, representative or interpreter.
- When the complaint has been fully investigated and considered, the Chair of Governors will notify the complainant of the outcome in writing, giving an explanation of the investigation and its conclusion, the reason for it, and any action taken or proposed to be taken, including details of any request made to those complained against, to take particular actions to resolve the complaint and the further recourse available if appropriate. The complainant may also be offered the opportunity to discuss the response. This notification brings the complaint to a conclusion.
- The aim of the investigation or review will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:
 - An appropriate expression of regret
 - Providing the solution desired by the complainant – if appropriate
 - Providing additional training if required
 - Changing the procedures to avoid future problems

The school will take responsibility for:

- Deciding who can take remedial action
- Ensuring that the action/s are carried out
- Ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers
- Ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent.
- Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate.

Unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants

The Headteacher and governing board are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. Sometimes however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner. Unreasonable behaviour may include:

Actions which are:

- Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint.
- Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted.
- Personally harassing.
- Unjustifiably repetitious.

An insistence on:

- Pursuing unjustified complaints.
- Unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints.
- Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language).
- Making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook.
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others.

- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

In cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of unreasonable persistent complaints/harassment.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken.

Physical or verbal aggression

The Governing Board will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect.
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals, subject to the policy.

Step 3: The role of the Secretary of State for Education

- If you think that the Governors have failed to consider your complaint properly and reasonably, you can raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Education. However, it is important to understand that this is not a general right of appeal for any parent who disagrees with the Governors' decision. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, the Secretary of State for Education will not reverse their decision.
- If you wish to raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Education, please write to:

The Secretary of State for Education,
 Department for Education,
 School Complaints Unit,
 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate,
 Store Street
 Manchester
 M1 2WD

Approved by Governors:
 May 2017

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

E-Mail address:

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:

Office Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: