



Grove Road Primary School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Introduction:

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. A concern may be defined as *“an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”*. A complaint may be generally defined as *“an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”*.

This procedure deals with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.

In most cases, the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision will be the first to be notified of the concern.

Grove Road Primary School is committed to taking concerns seriously and will endeavor to:

- Treat concerns with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times
- Treat concerns in confidence
- Deal with concerns promptly
- Acknowledge receipt of a written concern within ten working days, and provide a full reply within 20 working days.

Complaints procedures should not be used for appeals and referrals that fall under other procedures and legislation and which are covered by other guidance, including:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Staff Grievances
- Child Protection
- Whistleblowing

There is information on page 8 of this policy if you wish to complain about the above procedures.

Raising a concern or complaint.

The Grove Road Primary School complaints policy has three main stages.

Stage 1 – raising a concern

Parents can raise concerns by contacting their child's class teacher in the first instance or contacting the phase leader. This could be in person by appointment, by letter, by telephone or email via the school office (0208 570 6132 or office@groveroad.hounslow.sch.uk). Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at this informal stage. Staff will take notes of any discussion on the school's "Parent/Carer Record Form" which will be filed confidentially.

The complainant must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the concern prove unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. It is important to note however, that the informal process is not a compulsory step and there may be occasions when the complainant wishes to engage the formal process straightaway. Where this is the case, the school will attempt to resolve the complaint internally through the stages outlined within this procedure.

You should write to, email or call the school office within 10 school working days of getting the initial response. You will need to tell the school why you are not satisfied and what you would like the school to do. It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you wish the school to take to resolve your concern.

It should then be raised with the Headteacher/ Deputy headteacher (or the Chair of Governors, if the complaint is about the Headteacher) to investigate and respond to you. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. A meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible.

The school will offer written feedback (within 20 working days) in response to any complaint received.

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed.

The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Board can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

If you are still dissatisfied with the result at this stage you will need to put your complaint and reasons why in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors, c/o Grove Road Primary School, Cromwell Road, TW3 3QQ. All Governor Correspondence will be handed to the Chair on a weekly basis.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

Any review of the process followed by the school or of the investigation of the complaint will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant. The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the Headteacher or the Chair of the governing body panel that has considered the matter), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- (if the complaint is upheld 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 reoccur.

You and the school representative(s) will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting.

N.B. in cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the head teacher, the head teacher and Chair of governors will be informed of the complaint. The chair will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In

cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the governing body the member will be informed of the complaint.

The governor's complaints panel is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. This procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Board should inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed, and provide them with contact details for the Department for Education via the DFE Helpline on 0370 000 2288.

If at any time the complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing and the withdrawal will be acknowledged by the school.

ANNEX TO COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy for dealing with unreasonably persistent complaints, harassment or aggression

The headteacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the school's complaints procedure.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. The school is extremely committed to promoting positive relationships with all members of the school community, regardless of age, sex, religion, ability or culture and it welcomes the opportunity to address and resolve issues that may arise.

However, there are rare occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

1. What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in school's work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take time;
- follow the school's complaints procedure (and for staff members to follow the appropriate internal staff procedure).

2. What do we mean by 'unreasonably persistent complainants'?

For the purpose of this policy, 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 the following (not an exhaustive list):

- actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- uses freedom of information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- an insistence on only dealing with the headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.
- making what appears to be groundless complaints about staff dealing with the complaint and seeking to have them replaced.
- abusive or threatening behaviour or language towards school staff.
- failing to specify grounds of the complaint, despite offers of assistance from the school.

3. What is harassment?

We regard harassment as including 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 issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has an unjustifiably significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

4. What are the school's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment?

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure.

Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, 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 the unreasonably persistent complaints/ harassment policy;
- require any 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;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channeled through a third party chosen by the school, for example the local authority or legal team;
- inform the complainant that, with the exception of urgent communication regarding their child in school, the school will respond to their correspondence on a 6 weekly basis only;
- take legal advice on pursuing a case under anti-harassment legislation.

5. What if I have a new complaint to make?

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered in an appropriate time frame, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the unreasonably persistent complaints/ harassment policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals whose conduct falls within the scope of this policy.

6. Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body 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 (please also see Parental Conduct Policy)
- request an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO);
- take legal advice on pursuing a case under anti-harassment legislation;
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by The education act 1996.

7. Right of appeal

All persons who are notified by the school that they are being dealt with under this procedure have the right of appeal. Appeals must be addressed to the chair of governor under confidential cover, care of the

school. The chair of governors will consider each appeal on its merits, consulting with the headteacher as appropriate. The outcome of the appeal should be notified to the appellant and copied to the headteacher within 10 working days of receipt.

Date of Approval: September 2020

Date for Review: September 2023

COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED BY THIS POLICY.

EXCEPTIONS	WHO TO CONTACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) School re-organisation proposals Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). 0208 583 2711</p> <p>SEN Complaints should be made directly with the Local Authority SEN team on: 0208 583 2672</p> <p>Contact the Local Authority: 0208 583 2000</p> <p>Contact children’s services on: 0208 583 6600</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Initially to the Chair of Governors: ewaller5.313@lgflmail.org</p> <p>You may wish to contact Mrs Hilary Baker, Principal Case Officer, Exclusions & Fair Access at London Borough of Hounslow on 0208 583 2784. Alternatively, you can write to her at Access & Inclusion, Children’s Services & Lifelong Learning, London Borough of Hounslow, Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 4DN or by email to exclusions@hounslow.gov.uk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>The school has its own whistleblowing procedure for staff and voluntary staff to follow. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>The school has a Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy which sets out clearly the process for dealing with these complaints.</p> <p>Complainants will <u>not be informed</u> of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted directly and you can obtain their details from the school office.</p>

APPENDIX – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The complainant

The complainant or person who makes the complaint will receive a more effective response to the complaint if he/she: -

- co-operates with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- expresses the complaint in full as early as possible;
- responds promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- asks for assistance as needed;
- treats all those involved in the complaint with respect.

The complaints coordinator (Headteacher)

The complaints coordinator should: -

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure will be aware of the legislation around complaints including the equality act 2010, data protection act 1998 and freedom of information act 2000;
- liaise with staff members, deputy headteacher, chair of governors and Governor Services to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- keep records;
- be aware of issues regarding: -
 - sharing third party information;
 - additional support - this may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support.

The investigator

The investigator is the person involved in stages 1 and 2 of the procedure (often the Headteacher, deputy headteacher or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher)

The Investigator's role can include:-

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:-
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
 - consideration of records and other relevant information;
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
 - analysing information;

- effectively liaising with the complainant and the complaints coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- identifying solutions and recommending courses of action to resolve problems;
- being mindful of the timescales to respond; and responding to the complainant in plain and clear language.
- The person investigating the complaint should make sure that they conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

The panel clerk (this could be clerk to the governors or the complaints coordinator)

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant for the panel meeting and is expected to: -

- set the date, time and venue of the panel meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the panel meeting;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the meeting;
- record the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the panel meeting;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision;
- liaise with the complaints coordinator.

The panel chair

The panel chair has a key role in ensuring that: -

- the meeting is minuted;
- the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant and both they and the school have the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents/carers and others who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease – this is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with everyone treated with respect and courtesy;
- the layout of the room will set the tone – care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;

- no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to state their case and seek clarity;
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance – if a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the hearing;
- liaise with the clerk and complaints coordinator.

Panel member

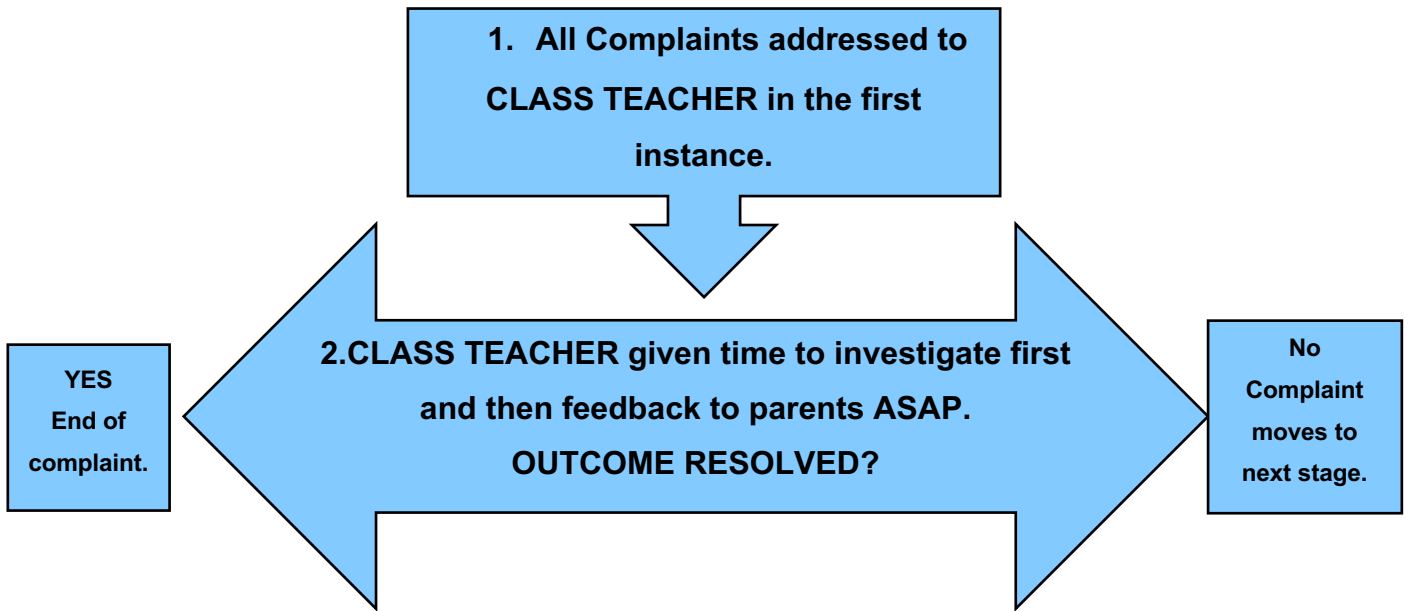
Panelists will need to be aware that: -

- it is important that the review panel meeting is independent and impartial, and that it is seen to be so;
- No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant;
- However, it must be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting;
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the hearing;

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated. The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. The parent should be advised however that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting which the panel considers not to be in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.



3. **FORMAL STAGE:** Complaint to be addressed in writing to the HEADTEACHER VIA EMAIL OR POST (to the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the headteacher) stating clearly what actions you are looking for to resolve your concern. Head given 10 days to respond in writing. If still not resolved, then moves to next stage.

5. Complaint addressed to **CHAIR OF GOVERNORS** in writing for an independent panel of governors to investigate the process in which the complaint has been handled. The panel offer the deciding and final decision.

END OF COMPLAINT