

# **Concerns & Complaints Policy**

St. Lawrence CE (VA)  
Primary School

With  
Little Lawrences

Napton

Adopted  
July 2017

Governors of St Lawrence CE Primary School have adopted the following policy to deal with formal-complaints from members of the school community or general public in accordance with DFE guidelines as provided by Warwickshire County Council.

### **Dealing with concerns at the earliest opportunity.**

If parents, pupils or members of the public have concerns they should:

1. Discuss their concerns with the relevant teacher /member of staff most directly involved and, if not satisfied;
2. Discuss their concerns with a senior member of teaching staff and, if not satisfied;

*An email or note directly to the member of staff or via the office for forwarding to the appropriate member of staff can be used in addition to / instead of the above methods.*

**We expect the majority of concerns will be resolved in this way (and not recorded as a formal complaint). However if not the following formal procedure will be followed.**

3. Discuss their concerns with the Headteacher. This is **Stage 1 of the formal process.**

At each stage in the procedure, schools will want to keep in mind ways in which a concern or complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the concern or complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an appropriate 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;
- a commitment to review school policies in light of the complaint.

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

**Only where all these avenues have been tried and found unsatisfactory should the complainant take a complaint to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body.**

### **Principles informing our complaints procedure**

This procedure is designed to:

- be well publicised and easily accessible
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- allow a mediation process if agreed by the complainant
- allow for a hearing of a panel of Governors, where appropriate
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible
- address all points of issue, provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- provide information to the school's Senior Management Team so that services can be improved.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.....there isn't really any reference in the document to investigations being undertaken by independent people.

## **Making a Complaint to the Governing Body - Stage 2**

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body at the school address. The envelope should be marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION' 'PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL' and staff in the school office must ensure that the letter is forwarded without delay.

The complainant will be asked to complete a complaint form (Annex 1) if they have not already done so. The Chair of Governors or Clerk will offer to help an individual to complete the form if appropriate.

On receipt of the complaint form the Chair of Governors (or other governor) will:

- 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.

At this point the chair of governors will decide whether the complaint should go straight to the governors' complaints panel or whether a mediation stage should be offered. Mediation can only proceed if the complainant and the Headteacher are willing for it to be tried. If mediation is not successful, the complaint will be considered by the governors' complaints panel.

## **Mediation**

Mediation can be a good way to resolve a complaint because:

- It gives both complainant and Headteacher another opportunity to hear each other's points of view (with a third party facilitating)
- It gives the third party an opportunity to help Headteacher and complainant identify and build on areas of agreement
- It gives Headteacher and complainant a structure within which they can resolve remaining differences.
- If both complainant and Headteacher emerge from the mediation satisfied, that is the best foundation for a continuing positive relationship between them.
- Even if the complaint continues to a governors' panel, the issues to be considered are likely to be much clearer following the mediation.

Mediation may elicit one or more of the responses listed below from either party:

- an acknowledgment that the complaint is valid in whole or in part.
- an appropriate 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 acceptance that the complaint needs go no further
- a commitment to review school policies in light of the complaint.

## **Governors' Complaints Panel**

Where the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with fully and properly, they may choose to take it to a panel of Governors.

## **Vexatious Complainants**

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complaint becomes vexatious (e.g. the complainant tries to re-open the same issue), the Chair of the Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**St Lawrence CE Primary School Complaint Form**

Please complete and return to **Chair of Governors, St Lawrence CE Primary School** who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

**Your Name:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Daytime Telephone Number:**

**Evening Telephone Number:**

**If applicable, name of child(ren) at school:**

**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?)**

**Your relationship to the school, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of public:**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official Use:**

**Date of acknowledgement sent:**

**By Whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

## Sharing your concerns about your child's education - A Parents' Guide

St Lawrence CE Primary School recognises that at times things can go wrong. This guidance will help you understand how to resolve concerns you may have about your child's education. The school has procedures for dealing with concerns or complaints and we value any feedback about our services, including compliments and suggestions. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's education, you should contact the Headteacher at the school.

The school's governing body has overall responsibility for the school and for ensuring the well-being of pupils and that all pupils receive an appropriate and high standard of education.

The Headteacher is responsible for making decisions on a daily basis about the school's internal management and organisation. So you should contact the school if you are concerned about an issue such as:

- your child's academic progress
- special education needs provision
- your child's welfare
- bullying
- something that has happened in school;

### **How do I complain to the school?**

First, we hope you will speak to the relevant member of staff as soon as you have a concern. This will be the class teacher (primary). This informal approach is nearly always the quickest and most effective way of resolving your concerns.

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved, then it is important to speak to or write to the Headteacher who will look into your concern.

If you are unhappy with the Headteacher's response you should write with your complaint to the Chair of Governors/Clerk to the Governing Body at the school address. Mark your envelope 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION' – Private and Confidential.

### **This is how your complaint will be handled**

**Within 5 working days** the chair of governors will clarify the nature of your complaint by asking you to complete a complaint form and will offer help in completing the form, if appropriate

**Within 5 working days** of receiving the form the Chair will decide whether mediation should be offered to help you and the Headteacher explore possible resolution.

If mediation is agreed, the chair of governors will endeavour to set up the meeting **within 10 working days**. If that timescale is not possible you will be told the reason.

If mediation is not deemed appropriate or if it is not successful, the Chair of Governors or Clerk will set up a panel of governors to meet **within 15 working days** of receipt of complaint form to consider your complaint. The clerk will provide details of the hearing and will request any further information you may wish to provide.

The complaints panel will consist of three governors who (as far as possible) will have no prior knowledge of the events being complained of. The panel will be supported by a clerk who will take notes during the hearing and will stay with the panel while they make their decision in case governors need to be reminded about responses to a particular question. The panel will hear the complaint impartially and make their decision based on the facts and the evidence they have been provided with.

Five working days before the hearing the clerk will send to you, the complainant, the Headteacher and the three panel members, copies of all papers submitted by both sides so that there is sufficient time to read the evidence before the hearing (which must be submitted to the clerk seven days before the hearing).

**At the hearing:**

1. You and the Headteacher will be invited into the room where the panel is being held at the same time. After introductions, you, the complainant will be invited to explain your complaint.
2. The Headteacher may question you.
3. The panel will question you.
4. The Headteacher will be invited to explain the school's actions
5. You, the complainant may question the Headteacher
6. The panel will question the Headteacher
7. The panel may ask questions at any point.
8. You, the complainant will then be invited to sum up your complaint.
9. The Headteacher will then be invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
10. The chair will explain that you and the Headteacher will hear from the panel within five working days.
11. Both you and the Headteacher will leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
12. The clerk will remain with the panel.

**Can I take my complaint further?**

**You cannot take your complaint to the local authority.** The local authority cannot investigate school matters on a parent's behalf nor can it review how the school has dealt with your complaint. However, if you feel that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>