

COMPLAINTS POLICY



Body Responsible for the Policy	Full Governing Body
Date Policy Approved by the FGB	22 nd February 2018
Date of Next Review	Spring 2019
Name of Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Spicer

1. Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

2. Aim of this Policy

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and 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 child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3. The Complaints Process

3.1 How to share a concern

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before the problem affects the child's progress.

Where a parent feels the complaint has not been resolved through an informal discussion with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher.

Should the complaint be regarding the Headteacher then parents should seek to meet with the Chair of Governors for preliminary discussions.

Should the complaint be regarding a Governor then parents should seek to meet initially with the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors.

We anticipate that the majority of concerns will achieve a satisfactory resolution at this informal stage.

However, should all parties not be satisfied with the outcome of this meeting then parents will be informed of the next stage of the process.

3.2 Stage 1

Parents will be advised to write to the Headteacher, giving details of their concern. The Headteacher will respond to the parent in writing, or by phone, as soon as possible. We will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response within 5 school days. The response may take the form of an invitation to a meeting or a letter.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a response will take longer than usual. In any case the investigation and response preparation will normally take place within 20 school days.

The Headteacher will follow up any meeting with parents by summarising the main points in a letter. This may prevent any misunderstanding and ensure that all parties have a clear record of progress or agreements.

If a parent remains dissatisfied, the Headteacher will decide when to give a final response and refer the parent to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

3.3 Stage 2

Parents will be advised to write to the Chair of Governors outlining their complaint and explaining the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Headteacher's response and enclosing any relevant paperwork.

Should parents need support in making a written complaint; they will be offered the option of dictating their complaint to a member of the office staff.

The Chair will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response in writing within 5 school days.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Chair will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual. Normal practice is to investigate the complaint and prepare a response within 20 school days.

This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties.

If a parent is unhappy with the outcome the Chair of Governors may offer a right of appeal to the Governing Body's complaints panel. Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any complaints panel.

3.4 Stage 3

Parents who wish to appeal to the Governors will be advised to request this in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body who can be contacted at: Clerk.Governors@peelcommon-inf.hants.sch.uk or via the school office.

Parents should describe the issues in detail and say why they are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the previous stage.

The Clerk to the Governing Body should write to the complainant within 3 school days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by 3 impartial members of the Governing Body. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These documents must be received by the Clerk in time to be sent out to the three governors at least 48 hours before they meet.

The school aims to resolve any formal complaints to the Governing Body within 20 school days. If this is not possible then a letter explaining why not will be sent.

The Clerk to the Governors should arrange to convene a Governors' Complaints Panel elected from impartial members of the Governing Body.

After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

3.5 Who to appeal to next

If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the Local Authority (LA). Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then they are entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

4. Monitoring and Review	
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4.1 The Governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

4.2 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.

5. Complaints not in scope of the procedure	
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The following exceptions have separate (statutory) procedures connected to them.

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).</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>

Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions
Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. 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. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.

7. Serial and persistent complainants

Peel Common Nursery and Infant School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Peel Common Nursery and Infant School defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;

- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Peel Common Nursery and Infant School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Peel Common Nursery and Infant School.

8. Procedure for Handling Complaints

