



**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **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.

During the past few years, changes in legislation have given schools a lot of independence from the Local Authority. This means that each school's governing body has overall responsibility for the school and for ensuring that all pupils receive an appropriate and high standard of education. If a school requests it, Officers from the Schools Service are available to offer information and advice.

If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

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.

The purpose of our complaints procedure is to provide a framework in which:

- Parents are clear about how they can express concerns and how they will be responded to;
- School staff and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities in responding to concerns.

This policy is intended to apply to general complaints. It cannot cover every eventuality. Complaints about admissions and/or exclusions, ALN appeals, staff grievance, disciplinary procedures are addressed by separate and specific protocols and may be covered in alternative school or Local Authority adopted policies.

### **THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Throughout the procedure, Stages 1 and 2 are considered to be informal stages.

### ***Stage 1 Complaint –The Informal Stage***

Ysgol Tycroes feels that the vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally and speedily by the member of staff (or the headteacher) with whom the parent makes first contact.

We will endeavour to ensure that parents are aware of the appropriate person to contact in the first instance.

We aim to ensure that parents know how they can raise concerns by either making contact via telephone or in writing, or by arranging to meet individuals in person.

We aim to ensure that the arrangements do not involve undue formality.

If a Governor, including the Chair of Governors, is approached by a parent directly with a complaint at this stage, the Governor will refer the matter to the Headteacher. However, if the complaint is about the action of the Headteacher, the matter must be referred to the Chair of Governors immediately.

Concerns and complaints may be resolved following the initial contact.

In all cases, members of staff dealing with the complaint will make a note of the date and details of the complaint, the outcomes and any agreed actions and inform the Headteacher.

If the concern or complaint is not immediately resolved, the staff member dealing with the matter will clarify what will happen next. This should be put in writing if it seems the best way of making the outcome clear, provides evidence of an attempt at resolution.

The procedure advocates the following steps:

1. Speak to the class teacher first - they know the child and class best, and are the ideal first point of contact
2. Speak to Phase leader/Deputy Head. For Nursery to Y2 this is Mrs Timothy-Davies, and for Y3 to Y6 this is Mr Stonham;
3. Speak to the Headteacher.

If it appears that the discussions are not going to lead to resolution and/or the complainant indicates that they are dissatisfied with the response, the staff member will inform the complainant of the next stage of the procedure.

### ***Stage Two - Investigation***

Parents who wish to pursue a complaint to Stage Two will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the school. Arrangements will be made available for those who may have difficulty in writing. Where appropriate, every effort will be made to provide translation for meetings with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and members of staff if required. The Headteacher (or designated member of staff) will acknowledge the complaint in writing

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within three working days of receipt, giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedures and a target date for providing a response. This should usually be within ten working days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant will be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.

The Headteacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her. The complainant should, if he/she wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities will be made available if required.

If necessary, the Deputy Headteacher will then interview any witnesses (staff or pupils) and take statements from those involved. If the complaint surrounds a pupil, the pupil may also be interviewed, normally with consent from his/her parent/guardian. On some occasions, it may be appropriate for a parent/guardian to accompany the child during interview. If this is not possible, a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should attend with him/her.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, they must be made aware of the complaint and have an opportunity to respond. They may also be accompanied by a representative such as a colleague or a Trade Union representative if so desired.

The Deputy Headteacher will ensure that written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation are kept.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher will review all the evidence. The Headteacher will arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss and/or resolve the matter. This meeting will be followed up with a letter setting out the outcome of the meeting. The complainant will be advised in this letter that if they wish to take the complaint further, he/she should notify the Chair of Governors within fifteen working days of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of the complaint.

If the complaint is against the action of the Headteacher, it is the responsibility of the Chair of Governors (or designated governor) to follow the Stage Two procedures. If the matter progresses to Stage Three, the Chair would then hand over responsibility to the Vice Chair or designated governor if he/she had dealt with the matter throughout stage 2.

### ***Stage 3 - Review by Governing Body***

Complaints only rarely reach this formal stage, but it is important that governing bodies are prepared to deal with them when necessary. ***It should be noted that Stages 1 and 2 must be completed before this stage is reached.***

Formal complaints to the governing body should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will ask the clerk to the Governing Body to acknowledge the complaint and to make arrangements for a meeting of the Complaints Committee. Complaints which may lead to disciplinary action should be handled in accordance with the school's appropriate procedures.

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The Governing Body will take care that no governor can be accused of prejudice by ensuring that:


- An individual governor does not deal with the complaint;
- The complaint is quickly referred to a committee charged with dealing with complaints or to the Headteacher, if complaint procedures at that level have not been exhausted;
- The complaint is not reported to the whole governing body until it is resolved, and then not in detail;
- The governing body will ensure that all parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing. It is important that a person against whom a complaint is made is given sufficient time (usually 10 working days) to consider all the evidence and take advice before providing a response, and before the hearing takes place;
- The decision of the committee will be given in writing to the complainant and any person against whom the complaint is made, usually within five working days of the Complaints Committee meeting;
- The letter will also advise the complainant that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure, they have the right to an appeal. They may also write to the LA who will carry out a further review. *This further review will however only consider whether the complaint has been fully and fairly considered according to the school's complaints procedures; it will not rehear the substantive complaint.*

### **Stage 4 - Review by Local Authority**

There is no role for the LA in dealing with complaints. The LA would only become involved in complex complaints and their role is confined to a review of the procedures which have been followed in order to confirm that the complaint has been fully and fairly considered.

### **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed in July 2026, or earlier if required.

<b>Headteacher:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	July 2023
<b>Chair of Governing Body:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

**APPENDIX**

The following protocols should be followed upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage Three.

1. The clerk to the Governing Body should write acknowledging receipt of the written request usually within **5 working days** and informing the complainant that it will be heard by a committee of the Governing Body, usually within **fifteen working days** of receipt. The letter should also inform the complainant that they have the right to submit any further documents relevant to their complaint and that these must be received in order for the committee members to be sent copies at least **five working days** prior to the meeting.
2. The clerk to the Governing Body should convene a meeting of the Complaints Committee. In establishing the committee, the Governing Body should nominate a pool of five governors from which three can be drawn for any hearing. This will ensure that there are always sufficient governors with no conflict of interest to constitute the committee when required. The committee should elect its chair.
3. The committee members should have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally, **it would not be appropriate for the Headteacher to have a place on the committee**. Governing bodies should have regard to the advantages of having a mix of different type of governor on the committee and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the committee.
4. All relevant correspondence and documentation should be given to each committee member. The chairperson of the committee should ensure that the complainant, Headteacher and any other witnesses are given **five working days** notice in writing of:
  - (i) The time and place of the committee meeting;
  - (ii) The grounds of the complaint together with copies of all documents relied upon by either the complainant or Headteacher;
  - (iii) The right of both parties to be accompanied or represented by a person of their choice;
  - (iv) The committee's option to proceed in the absence of the complainant/Headteacher or their representative if no good reason is given why they should not do so.
5. The chairperson of the committee should ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
6. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action, which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.

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7. The chairperson of the committee should try and ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that the complainant feels at ease.
8. The committee will conduct the meeting having regard to the following principal steps. It shall be a rule that the committee shall not see one party in the absence of the other except in a case where the committee has resolved to proceed in the absence of the complainant/ Headteacher in circumstances outlined in paragraph 4.(iv) above:
  - (i) The complainant/representative will open by outlining the complaint and present any documentary evidence and/or call witness(es) as appropriate.
  - (ii) The Headteacher/representative may ask questions of the complainant/representative or of any witness called by him/her. (N.B. This opportunity is reserved for asking questions to clarify matters not for making statements.)
  - (iii) Members of the committee may ask questions similarly.
  - (iv) The Headteacher/representative will respond to the complaint, present the documentary evidence and/or call witness(es).
  - (v) The complainant/representative may ask questions of the Headteacher/representative or of any witness called by him/her. (N.B. This opportunity is reserved for asking questions to clarify matters not for making statements.)
  - (vi) Members of the committee may ask questions similarly.
  - (vi) At the conclusion of the meeting, the chairperson of the committee should explain that the committee would consider its decision and write to both parties with the outcome usually within **five working days**. The Headteacher and any witnesses should then withdraw and the committee should consider its decision. This should include:
    - (i) A decision on the complaint
    - (ii) Appropriate action to be taken by the school, and where appropriate,
    - (iii) Recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school. **This should be held separately from pupils' personal records.**

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