

Park Way Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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 the Chair of Governors accepts that there are exceptional circumstances, for example a Child Protection issue.
- To allow for 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, unless there is good reason for the delay.

Raising a concern or complaint

The school recognises that there may often be concerns, questions, or issues raised by parents and carers and that these concerns should be addressed as part of the open dialogue and partnership between home and school to ensure that the school provides the very best. The school welcomes feedback and suggestions and seeks to resolve issues informally but effectively.

1) Informal Stage

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone, by email or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most issues will be resolved by this informal stage.

If your concern remains unresolved, or in the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Deputy Head Teacher or Head Teacher [or to the Chair of the governing body, if the complaint is about the Head Teacher].

The school will endeavour to give a prompt feedback in response to any complaint received.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office.

2) Formal Stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing, not email and pass it to the Head Teacher, [or to the Clerk to the governing body, for the attention of the Chair, if the complaint is about the Head Teacher] who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the complaint, in a sealed envelope to the Head Teacher or to the Clerk to the governing body, as appropriate.

The Head Teacher [or Chair] may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to seek an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend (not a member of the legal profession or the media), if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Head Teacher [or Chair]. If not arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 10 working days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. If you are not happy with the response provided by the Head Teacher [or Chair to the governing body] the complaint can be referred to the governing body for review. Any such request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.

Review Process

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 Head Teacher 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.

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

For most complaints the decision of the governors is the last step in the procedure.

The Local Authority

The local authority officially has no role in resolving individual school complaints and will refer schools and complainants to the school complaints procedure.

Annex to Complaints Policy

Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing Or Abusive Complainants

The headteacher and governing body 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. There is a procedure for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

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 complaint may be engaged 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, or
 - persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
 - personally harassing, or
 - unjustifiably repetitious
- an insistence on
 - pursuing unjustified complaints and/or
 - unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
 - pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language; or
 - making complaints in public; or
 - 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.

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;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure.

Schools' 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 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;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority.
- 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.
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

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;
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

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 subject to the policy.

