

# Parental Complaints Policy

Elmwood & Penrose Federation

## Guidance for Managing Parent Carer Complaints

It is hoped that many problems can be sorted out at an early stage and a close liaison is maintained with Parent Carers.

The initial part of the procedure should take no more than 15 days.

On receipt of a formal complaint, Governors may seek advice from Governor Support.

A record of all conversations will be kept to minimise any misunderstandings.

Racist Incidents are dealt with in line with the Federation's Anti-Racism Policy

Complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible and be fair and consistent to all concerned. Advice can be sought from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Council Information Point, from Governors and the Local Authority Access Officer – 01823 355748. Any one consulted at this point would not be involved in any stages beyond this. Parent Carers may be accompanied at any point in the procedure.

**PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS BY THE GOVERNING BODY**

1. **Upon receipt of a written request for a complaint to be reviewed by the Governors, the procedures outlined below should be followed.**
2. The Clerk to the Governors should write to the complainant within 5 school days to acknowledge receipt of the written request. If the exact nature of the complaint, and/or the complainant's desired outcome(s), are not clear from their letter, clarification should be requested. (A pro forma drafted by the LEA for use in this connection is at Appendix 1A). The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint will be considered by a panel comprising three members of the Governing Body, within 15 school days of receiving the complaint, and should provide details of the panel members and their status (eg parent governor, co-opted governor, etc). The complainant should be told what papers will be supplied to the panel (usually just the letter of complaint and/or the completed complaint pro forma) and should be afforded an opportunity to provide any further relevant papers for the panel's consideration if they so wish. The complainant should be given copies of any papers provided for the panel at this stage.
3. The Clerk to the Governors should arrange to convene the panel from members of the Governing Body. The panel members should be governors who have had no prior knowledge of the complaint. The Headteacher should not be on the panel and it would usually also be inappropriate for the Chair of Governors to be a panel member. The advantages of having a governor who is a parent on the panel should be borne in mind, as should the need to be sensitive to issues of gender, race and religious affiliation, if appropriate.
4. The advisability of including a teacher or staff governor on the panel, and whether such a governor would be compromised where the complaint is against a fellow member of staff at the school, should be carefully considered.
5. The complaint should be considered by the panel, preferably at a venue other than the school, within the period of 15 school days referred to in paragraph 2 above. Details of the date, time and location of the hearing should be agreed in consultation with, and confirmed in writing to, the complainant and panel members, at least 5 school days prior to the meeting. The letter should also outline in general terms how the hearing will be conducted (see paragraph 6 below) and confirm the complainant's right to be accompanied by a 'friend'.
6. The meeting must be properly minuted, either by the Clerk to the Governors or an independent clerk (not another governor) appointed for the purpose. **At the meeting, the following procedure should be followed by the Chair of the panel:-**
  - 6.1 Welcome all in attendance, and introduce panel members, giving their status (parent governor, etc).
  - 6.2 If the complainant is accompanied, check/clarify - if necessary - the name and status of the friend/representative.

- 6.3 Explain purpose of meeting, ie
  - to provide the complainant with the opportunity to explain or clarify their written complaint, and to enable the panel to identify any issues for investigation; and
  - to ascertain from the complainant what would, in their view, constitute a satisfactory resolution of the complaint.
- 6.4 Invite complainant to explain their written complaint, with panel members asking questions and/or seeking clarification as necessary.
- 6.5 Agree with complainant the issues to be investigated and/or considered by the panel.
- 6.6 Explain that the panel will undertake any necessary investigations and make a written response to the complainant (copied to the school) within 15 school days.
- 6.7 Thank the complainant for attending and seek confirmation that they feel they have had a full and fair hearing.
7. After the complainant has left the meeting, the panel should:-
  - 7.1 Produce a letter to go to the complainant confirming the agreed issues for investigation/consideration (see paragraph 6.5 on page 8).
  - 7.2 Agree the nature/scope and a timetable for any necessary investigations.
  - 7.3 If appropriate/necessary, agree a date to meet again, to consider the results of investigations and to draft/agree a written response to the complainant.
8. **The Clerk to the Governors, or other person appointed to act as clerk to the complaints panel, should assist the panel in the production of their written response, once the complaint has been investigated. This response should confirm:-**
  - 8.1 The date and venue of the hearing attended by the complainant;
  - 8.2 Membership of the Governors' panel;
  - 8.3 The issues mutually agreed to be the subject of the panel's investigations and/or deliberations;
  - 8.4 The methodology followed by the panel for their investigation; (eg interviews, written statements obtained, etc).
  - 8.5 The conclusions reached by the panel.
  - 8.6 The complainant's right, if they are dissatisfied with the panel's response, to write to the Authority within 10 school days of receipt of the response requesting a review by the LEA.

9. A copy of the panel's response (and of the complainant's request for the governors' review) should be forwarded to the Authority for information.
10. The nature of the complaint and the outcome of the panel's investigation should be reported, in general terms, to the next full meeting of the Governing Body, together with any implications for school policies or procedures which require further consideration/action.

**NOTE: Should the complainant subsequently proceed to the LEA review stage of the Procedure, the complainant and representatives of the school would be invited to attend the meeting of the LEA complaints panel at which it was to be considered.**

**Complaints Procedure**

**Governing Body Review - Request Form**



When you have filled in this form, please return it to the Clerk to the Governors, at your child's school.

Your name: .....

Your address and postcode: .....

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Your daytime 'phone number: .....

Your child's name: .....

Your complaint about the school is: .....

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When did you raise this with Headteacher?

When did you receive the Headteacher's response?

Your reasons for requesting a review are: .....

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(if you run out of space, please use extra paper)

## Complaints Procedure

### Governing Body Review – Request Form (continued)

What do you want the School Governors' Panel to do?

- give an acknowledgement and/or apology
- give an explanation
- give an undertaking to recommend revision of school policies or practices
- give a commitment to recommend steps designed to prevent a recurrence
- other action (please specify)

Your signature ..... Date .....

What happens next?

- you will receive an acknowledgement that this form has been received
- you will be invited to discuss your complaint with a Panel of Governors
- within 15 school days of meeting the Governors' Panel you will receive a full reply telling you the Panel's conclusions/decisions, explaining their reasons and informing you of any action that has been taken/recommended.

Equal Opportunities	Strictly confidential				
<p>By answering the following questions, you will help us make sure we give a good and fair service to all the people in the community. (Please tick the relevant boxes.)</p>					
Are you:	male? <input type="checkbox"/>	female? <input type="checkbox"/>			
Do you have a disability?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Are you:	White? (UK Heritage) <input type="checkbox"/>	White European? <input type="checkbox"/>	White Other? <input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify .....	
	Black Caribbean? <input type="checkbox"/>	Black African? <input type="checkbox"/>	Black Other? <input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify .....	
	Indian? <input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani? <input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi? <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese? <input type="checkbox"/>	Other? <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>This information will not affect the way in which your complaint is handled.</p>					

When you have filled in this form, please return it to the Clerk to the Governors at your child's school.





## APPENDIX 2

### PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW BY THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

- 1. Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to this stage, the procedure outlined below will be followed.**
2. Receipt of the request will be acknowledged and, if necessary/appropriate, clarification sought of the complainant's outstanding concerns and/or desired outcomes. An investigating officer will usually then be appointed. Exceptionally, where there is clearly no realistic prospect of resolving the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction under this stage of the Procedure, or there are alternative, more appropriate, means of addressing their concerns, the Authority may decline to proceed with a review. Correspondence with the complainant will be copied to the school, as appropriate, for the information of the Governors' panel and headteacher.
3. Once appointed, the investigating officer will study the written request and any other documentation submitted by the complainant and then arrange to meet with them to further clarify and/or confirm the outstanding concerns which are to be the subject of the LEA review. This meeting should normally take place within 15 school days of receipt of the written request referred to in paragraph 1 above.
4. Following this, the investigating officer will meet with relevant school staff and/or governors to obtain such information or advice as s/he considers necessary, and prepare a report. The investigation could take some time to complete and, in these circumstances, the complainant, the Governors' panel and the headteacher will be kept informed of progress.
5. On completion of the investigating officer's report, a meeting of an LEA Complaints Panel (comprising two county councillors and an independent Chair) may be convened. Copies of the report will be sent, in advance of the meeting, to the complainant and to the school and both parties will be invited to attend the meeting to explain their respective positions. The complainant will have the right to be accompanied by a 'friend' and the school may be represented by the Headteacher and/or one or more governors.
6. Following the meeting the complainant will be informed in writing, within 5 school days, of the conclusions reached by the panel, and any recommendations for action which might have arisen from consideration of the complaint. The letter will be copied to the school. If appropriate the complainant will also be advised of any further recourse which may be available to them.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERATION OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND DENOMINATIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

1. This Procedure is to be used to consider complaints about:
  - 1.1 the daily act of collective worship in voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools;
  - 1.2 denominational religious education in voluntary aided schools and in those voluntary controlled schools where denominational religious education is provided in accordance with the Trust Deed of the school.

The Procedure contains four stages at which a complaint can be considered.

#### **2. STAGE 1 - INFORMAL CONSIDERATION**

- 2.1 Many complaints can be resolved quickly in informal discussion between the complainant and the Headteacher, or other staff of the school. Unless there are very exceptional circumstances and, despite full discussion with the Head and/or staff of the school, the matter remains unresolved, complaints should not move to the formal stages. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the consideration of their concerns by the Head/staff, they should be informed that they have the right to put their complaint in writing and have it considered by Governors at Stage 2.

#### **3. STAGE 2 - FORMAL CONSIDERATION BY FOUNDATION GOVERNORS**

At this stage the complaint should be considered by those Governors of the school who are Foundation Governors. The following procedure should be followed.

- 3.1 The Clerk to the Governing Body will make arrangements as quickly as possible for the complaint to be heard and considered at a meeting of the Foundation Governors convened for this purpose.
- 3.2 The Clerk will invite the appropriate Diocesan Education Officer to attend the meeting and notify the LEA of its date, time and place and the nature of the complaint.
- 3.3 The Headteacher (who, ultimately, is responsible for investigating complaints at Stage 1) should attend the meeting.
- 3.4 The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting of the Foundation Governors to explain the complaint in more detail and will be allowed to be accompanied by a friend.
- 3.5 After the meeting, the Clerk will notify the complainant of the Foundation Governors' decision in writing within 7 days. The letter will include reference to any further steps (such as an appeal to the full governing body – see Stage 3 below) that are open to the complainant. The LEA and the appropriate Diocesan Education Officer will be informed of the Governors' findings and any action proposed by them.

#### 4. **STAGE 3 - FORMAL CONSIDERATION BY FULL GOVERNING BODY**

At this stage the complaint should be considered by the full Governing Body. The following procedures will apply.

- 4.1 The Clerk to the Governing Body will make arrangements as quickly as possible for the complaint to be heard and considered at a meeting of the full Governing Body.
- 4.2 The Clerk will invite the appropriate Diocesan Education Officer and a representative of the LEA to attend the meeting.
- 4.3 Where the Headteacher is not a Governor of the school then s/he will attend the meeting for the purpose of giving professional advice.
- 4.4 The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting to explain, and answer any questions about, their complaints and will be allowed to be accompanied by a friend.
- 4.5 After the meeting, the Clerk to the Governing Body will notify the complainant of the Governors' decision in writing, within 7 days. The letter will include reference to the further steps (such as an appeal to the relevant Church Authority – see Stage 4 below) that are open to the complainant. A copy of the letter will be sent to the LEA and the appropriate Diocesan Education Officer.

#### 5. **STAGE 4 - FORMAL CONSIDERATION BY CHURCH AUTHORITIES**

The final forum for consideration of complaints about the act of collective worship in VA and VC schools, and complaints related to denominational religious teaching, is the appropriate Church Authority. Complaints should be addressed to:

**Church of England VA and VC Schools** - the Bishop of Bath and Wells, The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset, BA5 2UE.

**Roman Catholic VA Schools** - the Bishop of Clifton, St Nicholas House, Lawford's Gate, Bristol, BS5 0RE.

**Methodist VA or VC Schools** - the Chairman of the Methodist district in which the school is situated.

It will be for the appropriate Church Authority to determine the membership of a Panel to consider the complaint but the following principles will apply.

- 5.1 The Panel will consist of not less than three members.
- 5.2 A representative of the school's Governing Body will be invited to attend the meeting arranged to hear and consider the complaint, and to address the Panel.
- 5.3 The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting to explain their complaint in more detail and will be allowed to be accompanied by a friend.

5.4 After the meeting the Clerk to the Panel will notify the complainant of the Panel's decision in writing, within 7 days and copies of the letter will be sent to the LEA and to the Secretary of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

**5.5 The decision of this Panel will be final and will bring local consideration of the complaint to an end.**