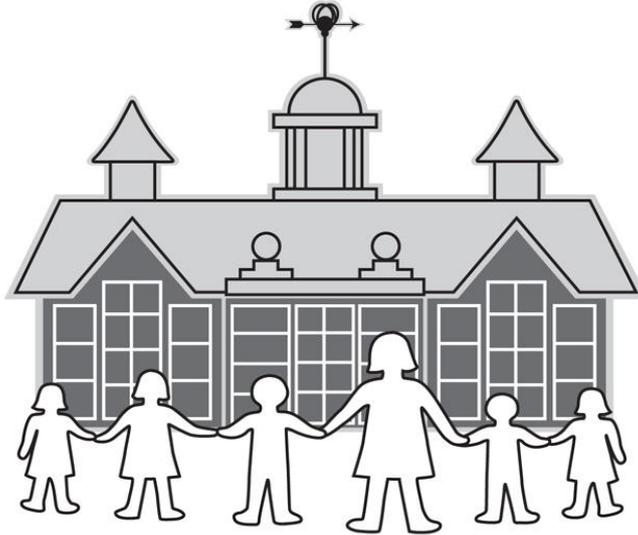


# North Ealing Primary School



## Complaints Policy

Committee with oversight for this policy - Resources	
Policy to be approved by the Full Governing Body	
Policy last reviewed by the Resources Committee	14/11/2018
Policy last ratified and adopted by Full Governing Body	28/11/2018
Policy / Document due for review	November 2020

# North Ealing Primary School

## Complaints Policy

**This Policy follows the guidelines set out by the DfE in their publication “Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016” (January 2016)**

At North Ealing we value positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community and endeavour to maintain these by working together to resolve any issues that may arise over time.

It is most important to recognise the difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. In the vast majority of cases, parent / carer **concerns** about issues related to children or the school can be handled successfully through informal, or formal, means. Child related issues should initially be raised with a class teacher and, if necessary, the matter can be passed on to a more senior member of staff such as phase leader, special needs coordinator, assistant head teacher or deputy head teacher. It is normally the case that a concern will be addressed and resolved in this way and clarification provided, if needed, in order to avoid any future issues. The school takes all concerns very seriously and a thorough commitment to resolving issues can be expected by all parties concerned.

On rare occasions, a concern may not be resolved using normal school procedures and if differences cannot be accepted by all parties, the school **complaints** procedure may be considered. This should be a final resort after other approaches have been exhausted. Making a formal complaint is a serious matter and the following process should be adhered to in such an event.

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1 Complaint heard by a senior staff member (normally a deputy head teacher)**

The school will respect the views of the complainant even if they differ from its own. Stage 1 is an opportunity for the complainant to meet a senior member of staff and attempt to resolve an ongoing concern. It is important that complainants do not directly approach members of the governing body as strict procedures and protocols must be followed.

If the complaint is directly against the head teacher, the meeting should be held with the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Complaints Committee / Vice Chair of Governors. If none of these governors are available, another governor may be suggested (not a parent governor) or the meeting will need to be arranged at a suitable time.

In both cases above, this meeting should take place within 10 working days unless there are prohibiting factors.

At this stage, the senior member of staff will try to ascertain what outcome or resolution would be most acceptable to the complainant.

## **Stage 2 Complaint heard by the Headteacher**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at stage 1, they may choose to either stop the process or move to stage 2. The head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The head teacher will meet the complainant and make a decision following a full analysis of the situation. This decision will be given to the complainant in writing and if the complaint is upheld, the head teacher will confirm this.

Again, the head teacher will try to ascertain what outcome or resolution would be most acceptable to the complainant.

## **Stage 3 Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.**

This is a formal and private hearing in order to establish the facts and make recommendations. The hearing is intended to satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously. The appeal panel will ensure the meeting has a clerk and may elect to take independent specialist external advice should it be deemed necessary to do so. Minutes recorded by the clerk may be available to all relevant parties following a decision by the appeal panel but not individuals' notes.

### **Procedure:**

The complainant should inform the panel in advance if s/he intends to invite any witnesses to give information to the hearing. **Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.**

1. After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
2. The head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
3. The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
4. The complainant may question both the head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
5. The panel may ask questions at **any** point.
6. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
7. The head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
8. Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
9. The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 20 working days.

## **The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel**

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

## **Independent Panel**

If the whole governing body is aware of the substance of a complaint before the final stage has been completed, the school will arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint. They may approach a different school to ask for help or the local Governor Services team at the LA.

Complainants have the right to request an independent panel, if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The School will consider the request but ultimately, the decision is made by the governors.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed

## **General**

At all stages in this procedure, the school will ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained.

In order to prevent any later disagreement over what has been said, the school will keep brief notes of meetings and telephone calls.

Some complaints fall outside the school's complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances or disciplinary procedures (see: Complaints not in Scope)

We recommend that the governing body ensures that any third party providers offering community facilities or services through the school premises, or using school facilities, have their own procedure in place;

## **Recording Complaints**

Schools must ensure that they comply with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It is common practice to ask for complaints to be made using a complaint form or in writing, however the complaint may have communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties and schools must allow alternative methods of contact:

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing;

In order to prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls should be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. Where there are communication difficulties, schools may wish to use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point;

Schools should record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The head teacher or complaints co-ordinator should be responsible for these records and hold them centrally.

Schools should be aware that complainants have the right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.