

Ridgeway Primary School



COMPLAINTS POLICY Guidance for Parents

The Complaint Hearing Meeting

- The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant inviting them to a meeting of the Complaints Appeal Committee. The complainant will be given seven days' notice of the meeting.
- Any written material relating to the complaint will be shared with all members of the panel, the complainant and the school within three days' of the hearing.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues. The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within seven days.

The Role of the Clerk

Any Complaints Appeal Meeting will be clerked by an independent clerk from the LA to ensure proper procedure is followed at all time. An independent set of minutes will be produced and will be distributed with the panel's decision. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the governors do not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his/her complaint has been taken seriously. Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Secretary of State **if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly**. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, the Secretary of State cannot reverse their decision.

Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the head teacher 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.

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.

The complaints process

Stage 1

If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and can take action before any problem seriously affects a child's progress.

Parents should make an appointment to see the class teacher so they can be given their full attention to deal with the concern. The teacher will probably be able to deal with minor concerns on the spot, but if the complaint involves concerns involving another child, family or a member of staff, it may take a little longer to establish all the facts before coming to any conclusion.

A parent should give the class teacher adequate time to investigate the complaint fully. **The class teacher will report back to the parent within 48 working hours of the complaint being made with an update and within 10 working days with a resolution.**

Stage 2

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact 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. The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

It may be that the Head Teacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point and may need to be given time to investigate the complaint. **The Headteacher will report back to the parent within 48 working hours and within 10 working days with the school's response.**

Stage 3

If a parent has a complaint about the Headteacher, or the way in which they have handled a complaint, i.e. if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint. A formal complaint should be made to the Governing Body. This complaint should be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors via the School Office. **A form can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website for this purpose.**

When considering a complaint the Chair of Governors may wish to seek technical or procedural advice from officers of the Staffordshire Local Authority Education Service on the appropriate course of action to be taken. **The Governing Body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt.** Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Chair of Governors may choose to deal with the complaint him/herself or may assemble a Complaints Appeal Panel to hear the complaint.

The Complaints Appeal Panel

Membership of the Complaints Appeal Panel should include three or five governors. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor on the Governing Body. A governor may not sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.

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

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

If the investigation upholds the complaint it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint