



Ridgeway Primary School
(Including Ridgeway Extended Services & Sunny Days Nursery)

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

We believe that our school and related settings 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 to be followed in such cases.

Aims and objectives

We aim 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 or care that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school or related settings, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher or in the case of the EYFS, their child's key worker. All staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy and can take action before any problem seriously affects a child's progress.

Parents should make an appointment to see the class teacher or key worker so that they can be given their full attention to deal with the concern. The teacher or key worker 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 school adequate time to investigate the complaint fully. **The class teacher or key worker 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 key worker, 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 Head Teacher will report back to the parent within 48 working hours and within 10 working days with the school's response.**

Stage 3

Should a parent have 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, as outlined below.

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 which provides an outline for parents to present their complaint in a format which will ensure that the Governors are given all the information which they will need in order to be able to investigate the complaint further.**

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.

OFSTED

Sunny Days Nursery under 2's room is regulated by OFSTED. Parents have the right to contact OFSTED after following the school's complaints procedure if they feel they have not received a satisfactory response to their complaint.

To make a complaint to OFSTED call: 0300 123 1231 or write to:

The National Business Unit,
OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Or visit www.ofsted.gov.uk for more information.

Mediation

Sometimes it is advisable to follow a mediation route where communication between the parent and school has broken down where an independent mentor mediates on-going discussions between the parent and the school to try and rebuild the relationship and find a suitable way forward for working together.

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. No governor may 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.

The Complaint Hearing Meeting

- The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant inviting them to a meeting of the Complaints Appeal Committee to explain his/ her complaint in more detail.
- 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 as an accurate record of the proceedings and will be distributed with the panel's decision.

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.

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. However, if after following the school's complaints procedure, a parent can complain to the Department for Education (DfE) if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly.

This is an on-line complaints service www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form

Serial and Persistent Complaints

School will always do its best to be helpful to people who contact them with a complaint or concern or a request for information. However, in cases where a school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks them to reconsider their position, schools will need to act appropriately.

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. It is important for schools to recognise when they really have done everything they can in response to a complaint. It is a poor use of schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. (See Policy for Persistent or vexatious Complaints)

Complaints not in the scope of the Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision or facilities or services provided by the school. The exceptions listed below have their own separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. • Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. • The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.

Protracted complaints

If properly followed, our complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors, is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Is it time to stop responding?

The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly. Schools should not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. In most circumstances the subject matter is what you can refuse to respond to, not the correspondent.

A school needs to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any); and

- They are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.
- The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- Their letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.
- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.

Schools must provide parents with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005. However, where an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption schools may wish to implement a tailored communications strategy such as restricting them to a single point of contact via an email address or by limiting the number of times they make contact; e.g. a fixed number of contacts per term.

Complainants have a right to have any new complaint heard and failure to respond at all to a complainant could mean that the school is failing to comply with its legal obligations. A school needs to ensure that they are acting reasonably and that any genuine complaint can still be heard.

Ultimately, if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought as to the next steps. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders will be issued to complainants because of their behaviours.

Monitoring and Review

The Governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher will record all written complaints received by the school and record how they were resolved. This information will be reported to the Full Governing Body on a termly basis.

Governors will take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Accessibility & Awareness Raising

The Complaints Policy can be found:

- External Notice Board at main entrance;
- New Entrants Pack for Nursery & Reception Children;
- www.ridgeway.staffs.sch.uk
- The School Prospectus
- A hard copy can be requested from the school office at any time along with a Complaints Form.

Joanne Jelves
Headteacher
November 2017

This complaints policy will be reviewed every three years.
Date of next review: 2020

Document History

October 2010	Adopted at Governing Body meeting 10 th November 2010
October 2012	Updated and adopted at Full Governors Meeting 8 th November 2012
January 2013	Reviewed and amended presented to Personnel Committee 24 th January 2013
February 2016	Updated and presented to Personnel Committee 11 February 2016
November 2017	Updated to include Sunny Days and presented to Extended Services Committee 21 November 2017

This policy will be reviewed in 2020

Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the Chair of Governors via the school office who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: