



# **Policy for dealing with Parental Complaints**

## **Rationale**

Appleshaw St Peter's Primary School strives to encourage a partnership with parents which is open and welcoming, focussed on the well-being of pupils. However, in any relationship difficulties may be experienced from time to time. This policy describes the school's approach to dealing with such difficulties.

## **Preliminary Stage (Informal)**

We believe that, in most cases, difficulties can be resolved through informal discussion. To this end parents are encouraged to make early contact with the appropriate member of staff, through the school office so that a mutually convenient appointment can be arranged. In the event of such informal discussions failing to resolve a concern, such a concern becomes a complaint; the parent will be referred to the following formal stages.

## **Stage One – Headteacher**

- 1.1 The complaint should be put in writing to the headteacher enclosing any appropriate documentation. This letter should not be copied to governors as this could prejudice possible governor involvement at a later stage.
- 1.2 The headteacher should respond to the parent in writing as soon as possible. Either a full response or an acknowledgement should be sent within five working days.
- 1.3 If the complaint requires detailed investigation, the headteacher will acknowledge within five working days and indicate that a full response will be sent within twenty working days.
- 1.4 If the parent remains dissatisfied at the conclusion of this stage the headteacher will need to give a final written response and refer the parent to stage two of the process.

## **Stage Two - Chair of Governors**

- 2.1 The parent should write to the chair of governors c/o the school. The letter should outline the original complaint and explain the reasons for pursuing it beyond the headteacher's response. Any supporting documentation should be enclosed. Parents should not copy the letter to other governors since this may prejudice later stages of the process.

2.2 Timescales for acknowledgment and response should be the same as those described in stage one above.

2.3 The chair of governors should consider the complaint and review the headteacher's handling of it in order to arrive at a satisfactory resolution.

2.4 If the parent remains unhappy with the outcome of this stage, the chair of governors should offer a right of appeal to the governing body's complaints panel. See stage three.

### **Stage Three – Governors' Complaints Panel**

3.1 The complaint should be put in writing to the clerk to the governing body requesting that the Complaints Panel consider the matter. The complaint should be outlined along with an indication as to why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous stages.

3.2 The clerk should arrange a hearing on a mutually convenient date and time. The meeting will be organised and run in accordance with appendix IV of 'Developing A General Complaints Policy' (HCC Nov 2002)

3.3 The clerk should inform the parent in writing of the outcome of the hearing. This will normally happen within two days of the hearing.

3.4 This concludes the school's complaints procedures. If a parent is still dissatisfied. they will be referred to the LA's complaints officer for further advice.

Appleshaw St Peter's is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. Appleshaw St Peter's defines unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Appleshaw St Peter's causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Appleshaw St Peter's

Reviewed October 2018

Next review due: October 2021