



Complaints Procedure

Reviewed and revised March 2016

Review date March 2018

Listening to Parents, Pupils and the Community

We aim to make our school a happy, safe and caring place so that pupils may benefit from the best possible education. All of our staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are dedicated to this aim. If you think we are not living up to your expectations of us, we want to know about it so that we may have the opportunity to put things right. We would also like to hear about the things you think we do well.

Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with

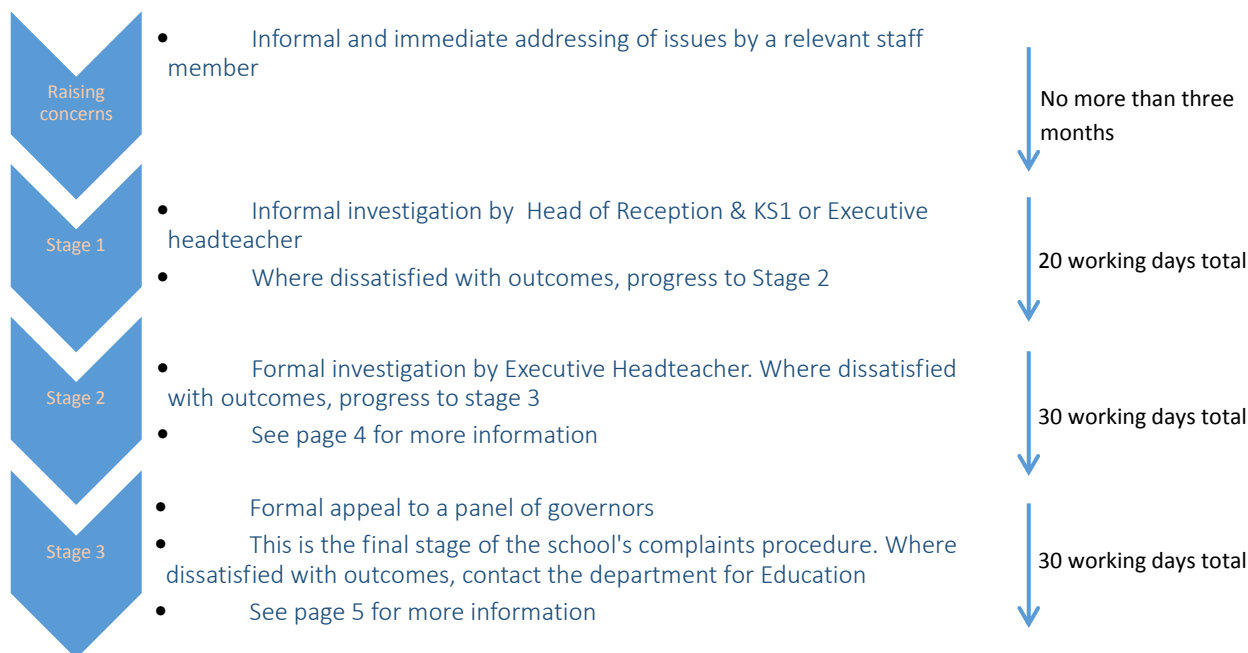
- Fairly
- Openly
- Promptly
- Without Prejudice

In order to do so the school has a detailed formal procedure, outlined below, which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

Procedure

If you need to raise an issue in the first instance, please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to establish a solution. If you are not satisfied with this response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please use the following procedure as detailed below.

Timeline



Timeframes

Meadow Lane Infant School will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding individual's availability to deal with the complaint, for example. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

Meadow Lane Infant School reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The HT will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the chair of governors of the decision.

Who should I approach?

Educational matters, Pastoral care, Disciplinary matters: Your child's class teacher

Financial/Administration matters: Executive Headteacher

Complaint about a staff member's conduct: direct approach to the staff member themselves. Where this does not resolve the situation, the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher should be approached.

Complaints about the Executive Headteacher or the governors

Where a complaint regards the Executive Headteacher the complainant should first directly approach the Executive Headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should then write to the Chair of Governors. The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation.

Where a complaint concerns an individual Governor the complainant should contact the Chair of Governors or, if the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, the Vice-Chair of Governors. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 3 will take immediate effect. The Chair, Vice-Chair or an independent investigator will mediate any proceedings.

Stages of the Complaint

Stage 1 – Informal investigation by the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher

Where as a result of raising a concern the complainant still feels that the issue has not been addressed, or where the outcome has been that the complaint needs further investigation than can be resolved briefly, they may progress by making an informal complaint. In doing so, the following steps will be followed:

1. Complainant contacts the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher
2. The complainant must explain in writing (a form is available to help with this and the school will arrange support where there are communication barriers).
 - i. An overview of the complaint so far
 - ii. Who has been involved
 - iii. Why the complaint remains unresolved
 - iv. Action they would like to be taken to put things right.
3. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will respond within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having received the written complaint. They will explain what action they intend to take.
4. Where the complaint is about a member of staff the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will arrange an informal mediation meeting between the two parties to see if a resolution can be come to.
5. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will provide a written confirmation of the outcome of their investigation within 15 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having sent confirmation of the intended action. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they are able to progress to stage 2 of the complaints process, and launch a formal written complaint.
6. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will make a record of the concern and the outcomes of the discussion which will be held centrally for twelve months, in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998

Stage 2 – formal investigation by Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher

1. The complainant may submit a formal complaints form to the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher. See the end of the procedure for contact details and for a copy of this form.
2. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will respond in writing within 10 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of the date of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and explain what action will be taken, giving clear timeframes.
3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

4. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:
 - i. a statement from the complainant,
 - ii. where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
 - iii. any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
 - iv. any supporting documents in either case
 - v. interviews with anyone related to the complaint.

5. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.

6. After considering the available evidence, the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher can:
 - Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
 - Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the stage three appeals process
 - Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the Head of Reception & Key Stage 1 or the Executive Headteacher may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.

7. The Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher must inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 20 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. They must explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They must detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint. Finally, they must provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage three if they are not satisfied, providing them with the contact details of the Chair of Governors and Clerk to the Governors (see the end of the procedure for these).

Stage 3 – appeal – review by a panel of the Meadow Lane Infant School Governing Body.

If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision by the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher at stage 2 of the procedure, or they are not satisfied with the action taken in relation to the complaint, they may appeal this decision.

They must write to the Chair of Governors (see the contact details at the end of the procedure) as soon as possible after receiving notice of the decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened.

The Chair of Governors will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the appeal hearing, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this 5 days in advance of the meeting, recording the proceedings in the form of minutes, and circulating these and the outcome of the meeting.

The complainant must request an appeal panel within 4 weeks of receiving the decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed:

1. The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within five working days (not including the school holidays) to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.
2. The Chair of Governors will convene a panel of two school governors and, where reasonably practicable, one independent member. All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.
3. The appeal hearing will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the date of the confirmation letter from the Chair of Governors to the complainant, confirming the appeal.
4. In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:
 - the complainant
 - the Head of Reception & KS1 or the Executive Headteacher who dealt with the complaint at Stage 2
 - where the complaint regards a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint.

The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.

The companion will be a friend or a colleague. If after the hearing any party feels that legal action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure.

5. If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.
6. Where the complaint is about a Governor, the complainant may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. It is at the discretion of the Governing Body. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source appropriate individuals for the review.
7. The panel can make the following decisions:
 - 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.

8. All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays).

This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, please see the contact details at the end of the document. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

Unreasonable complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Executive Headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (see the end of this document) if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Executive Headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the Chair of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the Chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the Executive Headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the Chair upholds the Executive Headteachers decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details at the end of the document).

Contact details

Executive Headteacher Mrs Joanne Revill
Head of Reception & Key Stage 1 Miss Anna Hodkin

Meadow Lane Infant School
Meadow Lane
Chilwell
Nottingham NG9 5AA
Telephone: 0115 9190644/0115 9192656
Email: office@meadowlane.notts.sch.uk

Chair of Governors Mr Andy Barker

As above

Contact details for external organisations if not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaints procedure in full

- If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure, please direct these to the Chair of Governors.
- If you feel that the governing board acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, you can complain to the Department for Education after the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that unreasonable is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances.
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>
- Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools www.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints

Relevant legislation and guidance

The Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

The Data Protection Act 1998 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>

The Department for Education *Best Practice advice for school complaints procedures*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

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