



Complaints Procedure

CONTEXT

At Clifton upon Teme Primary School we believe that parents and carers are essential partners in providing a happy, safe atmosphere in which children may learn and thrive. This equal partnership works best when relationships are built on open and respectful communication between staff and parents/carers. In conjunction with this policy, your attention is also drawn to a linked policy, [Code of Conduct for Interaction within our School Community](#).

We endeavour to make all parents/carers aware of how they can raise concerns using procedures that can be easily accessed by all. This is a legal requirement placed upon the Governing Body. These procedures are published on the school website and are available from the School Office.

The Complaints Procedure outlined within this document will not apply if the complaint relates to any of the following:

- the National Curriculum
- pupil admissions
- pupil exclusion
- special educational needs
- child protection
- employee grievances and disciplinary proceedings

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- This procedure is intended to provide a framework within which concerns or complaints relating to the school, or the services that it provides will be considered
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation
- It is usually unhelpful if a complaint is broadcast to the school community. The school will undertake to treat the matter with a high degree of confidentiality

and expects the complainant to do likewise. The school takes concerns and complaints seriously and will always actively seek to resolve the matter.

- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered.

RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

(Note: a flowchart outlining the entire procedure is shown in Appendix 4)

Stage One - Informal Stage

Most concerns can be dealt with quickly and effectively through informal means with members of staff at school. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person, or through communication in the home-school diary. Our technological world allows for almost instant communication, but we would ask you to consider that emails written in haste are generally unhelpful in resolving concerns or complaints.

You are always welcome to come into school to discuss any concerns or problems that arise and are encouraged to talk to your child's teacher in the first instance, as the teacher, having knowledge of both the child and events in school, is often the best placed person to help. We would always ask you to appreciate that it might not be possible for a teacher to discuss a concern with you immediately if s/he is in charge of the class, and s/he may need to arrange to speak to you at a later, mutually convenient time.

It may be that you feel that approaching your child's teacher could be awkward, especially if the matter you wish to discuss may affect a member of staff. If this is the case, or if talking to the teacher on a previous occasion does not seem to have resolved a particular problem, you should seek help from the Headteacher. The Headteacher has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and will recognise that situations like this can be difficult and sensitive. You can expect the Headteacher to take the appropriate steps to follow up your concerns, and to discuss the outcome with you. Obviously some time needs to be allowed for this to take place, but in most cases the Headteacher will contact you again within a relatively short space of time (ideally within five school days).

In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher (or to the Chair of Governors, if the complaint is about the Headteacher).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office or the clerk to the governing body.

Stage Two - Formal Stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you may choose to put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Headteacher.

Formal, written complaints will **only** be considered if submitted on paper, either using the form provided in the appendix, or by letter containing all the information requested in the form. It is hoped that complaints which reach this stage will be prepared with time allowed for reflection, and therefore emails are **not** deemed an appropriate means of communication.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, your complaint should be passed to the clerk to the governing body, for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

A Complaint Form is provided in Appendix 1 to assist you.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the completed form, with any accompanying documents, in a sealed envelope to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the Headteacher, or to the Chair of the governing body, as appropriate.

The Headteacher (or Chair) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Headteacher (or Chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school, in

handling the complaint. This will NOT involve reconsidering the complaint itself. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.

A Complaint Review Request Form is provided in Appendix 1 to assist you.

Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically.

APPENDIX 1 – FORMS

CLIFTON UPON TEME PRIMARY SCHOOL ~ FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM	
Your name:	
Your relationship with the school:	
Pupil's name (if relevant to complaint):	
Address:	
☎ Home:	
☎ Mobile:	
✉ email:	
Please write below concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated	
Continue on a separate sheet if required. You may also attach additional documents.	
Number of additional sheets attached ☐	

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

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

Signature:

Date:

Section below for school use

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

CLIFTON UPON TEME PRIMARY SCHOOL ~ COMPLAINT REVIEW REQUEST FORM

Your name:	
Address:	
☎ Home:	
☎ Mobile:	
✉ email:	

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on and I am dissatisfied with the way the complaints procedure has been carried out.

**My complaint was submitted to
and I received a response on**

I have attached copies of my formal complaint, and the response(s) received from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way the procedure was carried out because:

Continue on a separate sheet if required. You may also attach additional documents.

Number of additional sheets attached ☐

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

Signature:

Date:

Section below for school use

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

APPENDIX 2 – COMPLAINTS PANEL PROCEDURES

Complaints Panel Hearings

Following receipt of a formal complaint the Chair of the Governing Body will convene a Complaints Panel of at least 3 members of the Governing Body, to meet within 15 school days of the written complaint.

All Governing Body members sitting on a complaints panel will remember that:

- It is important that the hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No member may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to give any views expressed by a child the same consideration as those of an adult. Where the child's parent is the complainant, the parent should be given the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- The members of the panel must be aware of the complaints procedure as described in this document.

The Clerk to the Governing Body (or some other person nominated by the Governing Body) will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. The Clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and is required to:

- Send the complainant the Complaints Form at Appendix 1
- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates and venue are convenient to all parties
- Obtain names of any witnesses attending
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing
- Make a written record of the proceedings

- Notify all parties of the panel's decision, within 5 school days of the panel's hearing

The Chair of the Complaints Panel will ensure that:

- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease
- Each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption and is allowed to ask questions
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises the Chair of the Complaints panel will decide if it is relevant to the matter and if so all parties will be given the opportunity to consider and comment on it
- The panel is open-minded and acts independently

Conduct of the Hearing

The procedure to be followed at the hearing is a matter for the discretion of the Panel. However, it should give due consideration to the points outlined in Appendix 3.

The Remit of the Complaints 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.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

- The Chair of the Panel will record the Panel's decision and reasons for it in writing.

Within 5 school days of the Panel hearing the Clerk must send to the complainant:

- a copy of the panel's decision and reasons. If the appeal is dismissed in whole or in part, then the Clerk will include details of the further rights of appeal to The Secretary of State for Education.

Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed appropriately, the complainant remains dissatisfied. 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.

APPENDIX 3 – CHECKLIST FOR PANEL HEARING

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- 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.
- 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 a set time scale.

APPENDIX 4 – FLOWCHART SUMMARY

CLIFTON UPON TEME PRIMARY SCHOOL ~ FLOWCHART OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

