


Bledington Primary School



Complaints Policy And Procedures

Updated 20.01.21 24.02.22 24.01.23 01.01.24 09.01.25 16.01.26	Date of Ratification by FGB 31.03.17 25.03.21 23.03.23 18.01.24 29.01.25 28.01.26	Signed: CO-HEADTEACHERS 
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Safeguarding Statement

At Bledington Primary School we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at Bledington Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

All our policies are available at:

<https://www.bledington.gloucs.sch.uk/policies/>

Bledington Primary School **Complaints Procedure**

At Bledington Primary School, we are committed to providing a high-quality education and fostering a positive environment for all our students. We value the feedback from parents, carers, and the wider community and take all complaints seriously. This policy outlines the procedure for addressing complaints to ensure they are handled fairly, consistently, and promptly.

This policy applies to all complaints and concerns made by parents, carers, and members of the public about the provision of facilities or services by the school. It does not cover complaints from staff, which are dealt with under separate grievance procedures.

General Principles of complaints and concerns

It is important to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

These procedures deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended School provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Concerns raised against a member of staff that might be considered as a safeguarding one, will be dealt with using the GSCE Allegations Management procedures.

Bledington School takes complaints seriously and will act to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible.

Overview of the Complaints Procedure

This section gives an overview of the Complaints procedure. Please see the section entitled 'Stages of the Complaints Procedure' for the process described in greater detail.

Dealing with Complaints – Informal procedures

It is hoped, in the first instance, that concerns raised will be resolved on an informal basis, negating the need for formal procedures.

Complainants are encouraged to raise their concerns with the relevant

member of staff, such as the class teacher or Co-headteachers, as soon as possible.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the complainant may proceed to the formal stage.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. To make a formal complaint, the complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the Co-Headteachers. The complainant may use Appendix A to inform the Co-Headteachers. If the complaint is about one or both Co-Headteachers, it should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governors and addressed to the Chair of Governors. The Co-Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five school days and will investigate the matter thoroughly.

A written response will be provided to the complainant within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint, outlining the findings and any actions taken.

Appeal Stage If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, they may request an appeal. This request should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receiving the formal response. The Chair of Governors will convene a panel of at least three members, who were not involved in the original investigation, to review the complaint. The appeal panel will meet within 20 school days of receiving the appeal request. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and may be accompanied by a friend or relative. The panel's decision will be communicated in writing to the complainant within 10 school days of the meeting. The panel's decision is final.

Investigating Complaints

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, **who** has been involved and **when** it happened;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;

- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.
- respond within 10 school days.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the School will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, 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 or better;
- 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.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, this procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures 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. Furthermore, a number of unproven complaints made by an individual might be construed as vexatious; in which case all future complaints will be dealt with by the Governing Body or a group of Governors.

Withdrawing Complaints

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any stage of the Complaints Procedure, then they will be required to confirm this in writing.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the School can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

It would assist the procedure if the school respected the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complainant can be referred to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns one or both Co-Headteachers, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governing Board.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, they may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. It would be useful if governors did not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage.

Stage Two: Complaint Heard by the Co-Headteachers

The Co-Headteachers' influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one, as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The Co-Headteachers may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Governing Bodies Complaints Appeal Panel

The complainant needs to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a Governors' Complaints Panel.

The governors' appeal hearing is the last School-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body may nominate several members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage and set out its terms of reference. These can include:

- drawing up its procedures;
- hearing individual appeals;
- making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

The procedure adopted by the panel for hearing appeals would normally be part of the school's complaints procedure. The panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three to five people. The panel may choose their own chair.

The Remit of The Complaints Appeal 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.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. 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 and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

- b) The aim of the hearing, which needs to 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 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.
- c) 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 panel chair 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 that setting is informal and not adversarial.
- d) 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 be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- e) The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the Complaints procedure.

Roles and Responsibility

The Role of The Clerk

We strongly recommend that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- 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;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that;

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- 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;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

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 within 3 school days. The response needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Publicising the Procedure

There is a legal requirement to make people aware that there is a Complaints Procedures. Details of the Complaints Procedures are published on the school's website.

Please see the appendices below

APPENDIX

Annex A

Bledington Primary School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Ms J Kewley and/or Mme. A. Ziebeck 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:

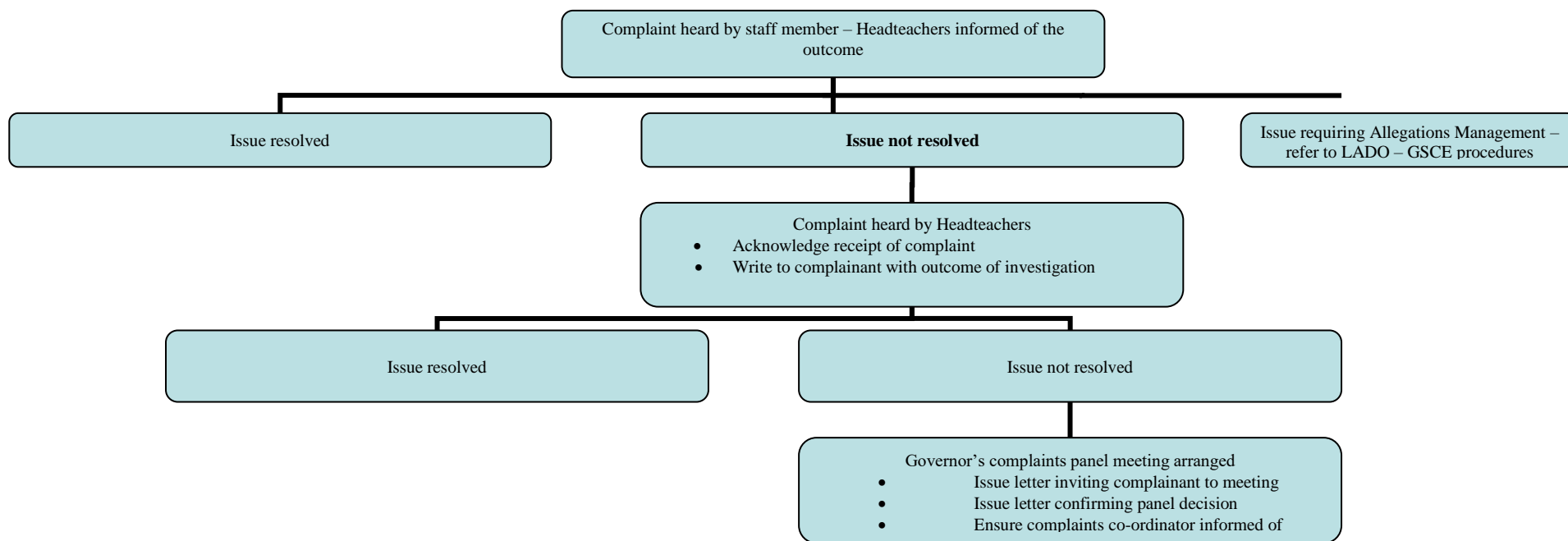
By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Flowchart

Summary of Dealing with Complaints



Written 31.03.2017
Updated annually.