



# The Federation of Mill Hill and Woodcroft Primary Schools Complaints Policy

## Contents:

- Policy
- Stage 1 – Informal Complaint
- Stage 2 – Formal Complaint
- Stage 3 – Formal Complaint to the Governing Body
- What to do if you have a Concern – Flow Chart

**Co-ordinator responsible for the policy in consultation with the staff and governors:**

Head Teachers

**Reviewed:** January 2018

**Next Review Date:** January 2021

## **Introduction**

This policy is intended to set out how the Federation will deal with complaints. All members of each schools community should feel able to express their views in the full knowledge that they will be dealt with fairly.

At both Mill Hill and Woodcroft Primary School, we welcome suggestions for improving our work. All concerns or complaints are important to us and will be investigated with due urgency and thoroughness. Our primary concern is the quality education and welfare of each child. Whenever a complaint is upheld, every effort will be made to rectify the issue and, if necessary, action will be taken to try to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem. The school will not investigate anonymous complaints or allegations.

This policy is not intended to cover those aspects of school life where the law sets specific complaints procedures i.e. admissions, exclusions, complaints about the delivery of the curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education.

## **Aims**

- To provide an accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints.
- To encourage parents and members of each schools community to express their views at the earliest opportunity, through the appropriate channels.
- To increase mutual understanding between parents, the Federation community and each school
- To create an ethos where the schools, parents and communities are committed to working together for the benefit of each child within the Federation.

Whether a complaint is made informally or formally, all parties involved should make every effort to respect confidentiality. Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.

## **How we Manage Concerns and Complaints**

### **STAGE ONE – Informal Complaint**

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through direct contact with the class teacher, Senior Admin Manager, Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body, depending on the nature of the concern or complaint.

We aim to resolve any informal complaint within two working days. If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, they will refer to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised. They will continue to follow the matter through until it has been fully addressed and the matter is resolved either at a face-to-face meeting or by telephone. On certain issues, the Headteacher of that particular school may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.

If the concern relates to either of the Headteachers, the person is advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body via the Clerk who can be contacted via Woodcroft Primary School.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found, complainants are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they are given clear information about how to make a formal complaint (Appendix 1) and about any independent advice available to them.

### **STAGE TWO – Formal Complaint**

The complainant makes a written complaint to the Headteacher of the school concerned or Chair of the Governing Body. When a formal written complaint is made, it will be acknowledged in writing within three working days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint.

We aim to resolve any formal complaints to that school's Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body within ten working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

The Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if they wish, they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf. They should also be asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing, language support etc.

If necessary, the Headteacher of the school concerned should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present. In some situations, circumstances may prevent this e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where particular circumstances mean that a pupil has specifically said they would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved. In such circumstances, another member of staff with whom the pupils' feels comfortable should be asked to attend. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

The Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body should then produce a written response to the complainant, or may prefer to meet with them to discuss / resolve the matter directly.

A written response includes a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should they wish to take the complaint further they should notify the Chair of the Governing Body within five weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

### **STAGE THREE – Formal Complaint to the Governing Body**

The complainant makes a written complaint to the Governing Body. The Clerk to the Governing Body should write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within three working days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by three members of the school's Governing Body

The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These documents must be received by the Clerk in time to be sent out to the three governors before they meet.

We aim to resolve any formal complaints to the Governing Body within twenty working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

The Clerk to the Governing Body should arrange to convene a Governing Body Complaints panel elected from members of the Governing Body. The Chair /Vice-Chair will ensure that the complaint is heard by the Panel within twenty working days of receiving the letter at Stage Three. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each panel member as soon as the composition of the Panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive; the Chair of the Panel should prepare a thorough summary for send to panel members.

The Chair / Vice-Chair will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses, and members of the Panel at least five working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform them of their right to be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf. They should also be asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing, language support etc. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The meeting will allow for: -

- The complainant to explain their complaint
- The Headteacher to explain the school's response
- The Headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint
- The complainant to question the Headteacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response
- Panel member to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
- Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the Approval of the Chair)
- All parties having the right to question the witnesses
- Final statement by both the complainant and the Headteacher
- The Chair of the Panel to explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the panel will next consider its decision and a written decision will be sent to both parties within fifteen working days.

The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented reach a majority decision on the complaint and decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate the Governing Body will recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Headteacher. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made, this is most likely to be through the LA.

**What to do if you have a Concern**

**INFORMAL  
(to member of staff or relevant  
Headteacher)**

Aim to resolve within 2 working days

Outcome is unsatisfactory –  
complainant is advised how to  
proceed

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**FORMAL  
(to relevant Headteacher or Chair of  
Governors)**

Aim to resolve within 10 working days  
or explain in writing why this cannot  
be achieved

Outcome is unsatisfactory –  
complainant is advised how to  
proceed

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**FORMAL  
(to Governing Body)**

Aim to resolve within 20 working days  
or explain in writing why this cannot  
be achieved

Outcome is unsatisfactory –  
complainant is advised how to  
proceed

**APPEALS PROCESS  
Through the LA**

Talk to a member of staff or the  
relevant Headteacher about the  
problem or concern

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The member of staff or relevant  
Headteacher follows this up and aims to  
resolve, ending

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Written complaint to the relevant  
Headteacher or Chair of Governing Body.

Written confirmation of receipt of letter  
within 3 working days.

Relevant Headteacher or Chair of  
Governing Body conducts documented  
investigation.

Relevant Headteacher or Chair of  
Governing Body prepares the written  
response and may arrange meeting with  
complainant if appropriate

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Formal complaint  
to the Governing Body

Written confirmation of receipt of letter  
within 3 working days

Information gathered

Panel meeting of 3 Governing Body  
members, complainant and relevant  
Headteacher to attend

Panel reach a decision and inform the  
complainant and the relevant  
Headteacher

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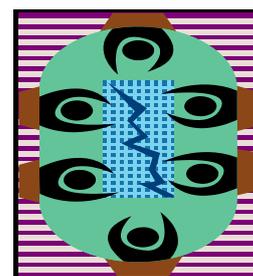
Outcome is satisfactory, action and outcomes are  
agreed and the problem is resolved.

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Outcome is satisfactory – written report to  
complainant, agreed actions and outcome –  
Problem resolved.

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Outcome is satisfactory – written report to  
complainant and relevant Headteacher, agreed  
actions and outcome.

Problem resolved.

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