

LAIRA GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS POLICY



Rationale

Regrettably there may be times when individuals and groups are dissatisfied with events and actions undertaken by members of staff within the school. This policy enables all parties to see ways to move forward and endeavours to find a way to set aside the complaint and move on.

Aims

- To maintain a low level of complaints against the school.
- To ensure all parties are aware of the steps to be taken when a complaint is made.
- To provide an appropriate support for both “sides”.
- To address reasons for complaints.

Guidelines:

(The Plymouth LA has provided, as a standard, the following :-)

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOLS PROVIDING GUIDANCE
FOR PARENTS, PUPILS AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY**

Stages of the procedure

Stage 1 — informal discussion with class teacher and/or Head

Stage 2 — formal written complaint to Head

Stage 3 — formal written appeal to Chair of Governors

Stage 4 -- formal complaint to Directorate of Children’s Services (DCS)

Stage 1 — informal discussion with class teacher and/or Head

Where a concern is brought to the school’s attention it can often be resolved with a single conversation. Sometimes the issue is more complex and will take more than one discussion to resolve. Occasionally despite the best efforts of those concerned these discussions do not resolve the issue, which then may become a complaint.

Stage 2 — formal written **complaint to Head**

The complainant will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing to the Head and it should be acknowledged in writing within 2 days of receipt, confirming that the investigation will be completed within 4 school weeks. If however the complaint is received on the last day of the summer term the Head should attempt to contact the complainant by telephone to discuss the timescale for investigation and reporting. The letter acknowledging the complaint should

confirm the details of this conversation or, if the Head has been unable to make telephone contact, that the situation will be investigated at the beginning of the Autumn term and suggest a date for a meeting to discuss the findings. The Head should notify the Chair of Governors that a formal complaint has been received, the nature of that complaint and proposed action.

The Head will copy relevant papers to any parent of a pupil or member of staff named in the complaint and make a full investigation. On completion of the investigation the Head should arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss the results. The complainant should be encouraged to bring a friend, interpreter or advocate to the meeting. Following the meeting a letter should be sent to the complainant outlining the results of the investigation and meeting and, if appropriate, detailing the proposed course of action. The complainant's right to refer the decision to the Chair of Governors should also be included in the letter.

Stage 3— formal written appeal to Chair of Governors

A complaint can only be made to the Chair of Governors if the complainant has:

- already completed Stages 1 and 2;
- allowed 4 school weeks for the Head to complete the investigation at Stage 2;
- accepted any reasonable offer by the school to discuss the findings of the investigation;
- taken part in any process of mediation offered by the school, such mediation should be undertaken by an independent person who has not been involved or know about the nature of the complaint; and
- put the complaint in writing within two months of the event.

If the complaint is received on the last day of the Summer term the Chair of Governors should attempt to contact the complainant by telephone to discuss the timescale for the appeal process. The letter acknowledging the complaint should confirm the details of this conversation or, if the Chair of Governors has been unable to make telephone contact, that the situation will be investigated at the beginning of the Autumn term and suggest a date for a meeting of the complaints committee of the Board of Governors.

The Chair of Governors must set up a committee to deal with appeals on general complaints. This could be the committee that deals with exclusions or personnel issues, since the procedures will be similar. The committee's responsibility is to hear and decide about formal complaints that have not been resolved at an earlier stage.

The committee **should consist of 3 Governors who have not previously been involved in dealing with the complaint.** The Head and teacher/staff Governors should not be members of the committee and reserves should be named to ensure that the committee could be constituted when necessary. A complaint may give rise to subsequent disciplinary proceedings against a staff

member and the procedure for dealing with a complaint should therefore be kept separate from any application of the school's staff discipline procedure.

The complainant should write to the Chair of Governors within two months of the event requesting a meeting of the committee responsible for appeals on general complaints, enclosing a copy of the complaint, all supporting evidence and specifying which matters remain unresolved. No new complaints may be included.

The Clerk to the Governors will arrange all matters relating to the meeting, including the date that will be no later than 4 school weeks from receipt of the complaint. The Clerk will copy the complaint to the Head who will have 10 school days in which to respond.

Any documents from either the complainant or the Head to be considered by the committee, and the names of any witnesses or friends who might attend, must be received by the Clerk at least 7 school days before the meeting. Copies of the agenda and all documents will be forwarded to the committee members, Head, complainant and Chair of Governors at least 5 school days before the meeting date. The Head will copy relevant papers to any member of staff named in the complaint.

The complainant should be encouraged to bring a friend, interpreter or advocate to the meeting.

The Head may bring a friend or professional representative to the meeting.

Any teachers or other members of staff required to attend can bring a friend or professional representative.

The committee will consider the complaint on the basis of the papers they receive and what is said at the meeting. The Clerk will take minutes that must remain confidential.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in full or in part, and make recommendations to the Governing Body for action, and where appropriate suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again, or
- decide to recommend no action be taken and give reasons for the decision.

Within 7 days of the meeting the Clerk will send a letter to the complainant, Head and Chair of Governors outlining the outcome of the meeting. It is important that everyone understands that the committee is acting on behalf of the Governing Body and no further appeal to the Governing Body is available.

Stage 4 – formal written complaint to Directorate of Children’s Services

If the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further this should be done by following the DCS’s procedure for dealing with complaints about schools that fall outside statutory requirements.

It must be understood however that the DCS’s role is not to investigate and direct the Governors or Head to take a particular course of action, but to help find a solution to a complaint. The DCS will listen to the complaint, ask questions and give advice on how to break the deadlock. The Governing Body is not obliged to accept the LAs advice about how a complaint might be resolved, provided the school has acted lawfully.

Laira Green Primary School pupil complaints:

- Pupils will be encouraged to be clear what they are unhappy about.
- Within the daytime placement, pupils will be offered the option of speaking to an adult (Teacher or TA) in order to resolve the issue. If their complaint is against an adult, another member of staff will support the pupil. Complaints can also be made in writing using the attached Proforma.
- In Residence pupils may speak to their key worker or another member of staff, they may also make their complaint via the Independent Listener or the regular nominated visitor or their parents. Pupils can also submit their concern in writing, and all have access to a written procedure (attached).
- All pupil complaints will be investigated and outcomes actioned in accordance with and regard to, pupil confidentiality and their health, safety and well-being.
- If a pupil remains unhappy with the outcome a senior manager will investigate and the Governing Body will be informed.