

Complaints Policy

Incorporating the Policy for handling unreasonably persistent complaints



2022-2025

Loving Learning Together

Knotty Ash Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Aims of this policy

- To listen to our pupils and parents
- To receive complaints as a positive means of promoting pupil/parent satisfaction
- To use complaints as a means of identifying opportunities to improve services
- To seek to resolve complaints swiftly and fairly
- To have clear and published procedures for dealing with complaints

1 Introduction

1.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concern or complaint. We will listen carefully and give careful consideration to all issues that are raised, aiming to resolve them as swiftly as possible.

1.2 Raising a concern or complaint can cause anxiety for some parents or carers. Bringing it to our attention early will reduce your anxiety and we ask that you discuss concerns as soon as possible after they arise.

1.3 We aim to resolve concerns and complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding. In every case, we put the interests of the child above any other issue. We provide sufficient opportunity for any concern or complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

1.4 Concerns and complaints are treated with confidentiality and are only discussed with relevant and appropriate individuals.

1.5 The school values and respects the views of parents as their child's first teacher. Likewise, the headteacher and Governing Body expect parents and carers to respect the professional judgement of teaching staff who they have entrusted to act in 'loco parentis' at all times while the child is in the care of the school.

2 Process for Raising Concerns and Complaints

2.1 If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the care or education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, raise their concern with their child's class teacher. Most matters can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they will want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

2.2 Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently

serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. The Headteacher considers any such concern very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly, aiming to respond to parents verbally or in writing within three working days. Concerns are normally resolved at this stage, if not they are considered as an informal complaint.

2.3 Should a parent have a concern about the Headteacher, s/he should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the Governing Body, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

2.4 Only if raising an informal concern fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors, in a sealed envelope addressed c/o the school and marked confidential.

2.5 The Governing Body should aim to consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will then arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

2.6 After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

2.7 If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Department for Education.

2.8 Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

2.9 The school does not have the resources for staff to repeatedly discuss an issue where a concern or complaint has not been upheld and, in the professional judgement of the headteacher, the child's welfare and education are well catered for at the school. Appointments and meetings are time limited at the discretion of the teacher or headteacher who may suggest that the complaint be taken formally to Governors for consideration.

2.10 While the school understands that raising concerns or complaints can be emotive for parents, the Governing Body will not tolerate or accept inappropriate or aggressive behaviour, verbal or otherwise, towards any member of staff. If a teacher or the headteacher judges the behaviour of parents to be unacceptable, the meeting will be postponed and carried out with an additional member of staff at a future date. Raising concerns when they first arise is helpful in reducing the levels of anxiety for parents.

2.11 Anonymous complaints are considered by the headteacher and are

investigated carefully. However, senders should be aware that anonymous e-mails or letters cannot be treated equally or addressed as thoroughly as those from an acknowledged source.

2.12 The school takes very seriously any anonymous allegation that proves to be malicious and unfounded. The police will be informed and appropriate legal action taken under the Malicious Communications Act 2003.

2.13 If followed, this complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However there will be occasions when, despite all stages and procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen this 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.

3 Monitoring And Review

3.1 The governors monitor the complaints procedure every three years. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

3.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. Relevant new legislation supersedes this policy which is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

4 Time Scales

4.1 Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

5 Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Knotty Ash Primary, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Liverpool Local Authority .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	<p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

Policy For Handling Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/Harassment

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority;
- limit the number of contacts (e.g. per term) by the complainant.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or persistent - even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or personally harassing, or unjustifiably repetitious
- an insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
- an insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (eg using abusive or threatening language; or making complaints in public; or
- refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure.

Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- National Regulations on School Complaints
- DfE guidance and model policies

Further References

Policies: Health and Safety

Teaching and Learning

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Safeguarding

Documents: LCC Guidance (staff / visits and trips)

DfE guidance on Access and Barring from School Premises

**This policy was reviewed and formally adopted by Governing Board
on 25th June 2019**