



Poulner Junior School

Complaints from Parents Policy

Written by: Mrs Jo Randall (Headteacher)

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Version	Reviewed	Ratified	Description of main changes	Signature
1.0	27/02/18 by P&R Committee	27/02/18 by P&R Committee		
1.1	21/11/18 by JW		Change of modal verbs e.g. 'should' and 'may' to 'will' Guidance taken from DfE 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016	
1.2	30/12/2020		No changes made	
1.3	11/5/22		Change from Inclusion leader to SENDCo and Pastoral leader	

Next Review Date: Spring Term 2 (2026-2027)

Reviewed & Ratified by: Premises & Resources Committee

Review Frequency: every 3 years

Description of policy: complaints from parents policy

Other Documents referred to: Parent communication policy

Poulner Junior School

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Underlying principles:

- To prevent concerns from developing into major complaints or litigation.
- To strengthen parents' confidence.
- To strengthen relationships between parents, school and the community.
- To recognise that things can go wrong and that the school is committed to resolving concerns as quickly and effectively as possible.
- The school will not usually act on anonymous complaints unless there is a Child Protection issue

Aims:

- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage.
- To respond promptly, with well-defined timescales and named contacts.
- To focus on resolution and service review rather than blame.
- To promote confidentiality and discretion – parents do however need to be aware that enquiries may need to be made in respect of the complaint, but are assured that this will be carried out sensitively.
- To include fair and transparent investigative processes for staff as well as complainants
- To indicate other sources of advice where appropriate
- To be forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive, malicious and anonymous complainants.

The staged approach for dealing with complaints:

Informal Stage

Should a parent have an initial concern they should, at the earliest opportunity, speak informally to their child's class teacher.

Should the complaint be regarding the Headteacher then parents should seek to meet with the Headteacher for preliminary discussions.

Where a parent feels the complaint has not been resolved through an informal discussion with the class teacher, or if their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature they should make an appointment to discuss it with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

We anticipate that the majority of concerns will achieve a satisfactory resolution at this informal stage.

For parents whose child have Special Educational Needs the Headteacher will involve the Inclusion Leader with the informal discussions, where the complaint is regarding the Inclusion Leader then parents should seek to meet directly with the Headteacher for preliminary discussions. If the parent has Special Educational Needs then the school will offer unbiased additional support in helping the parent to verbalise or record their concerns and to understand the complaints procedure.

However, should all parties not be satisfied with the outcome of this meeting, or if the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally, then parents should follow the formal stage of the complaints process as follows.

Formal Stage

Stage 1

Parents will write to the Headteacher, giving details of the concern and enclosing any appropriate paperwork (a complaints procedure form will be supplied see appendix 1). If the complaint relates to the Headteacher then the complaint will be addressed to the Chair of Governors c/o Poulner Junior School.

The Headteacher, will respond to the parent in writing, or by phone, as soon as possible. We will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response within five school working days. The response may take the form of an invitation to a meeting or a letter.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a response will take longer than usual. The investigation and response preparation will normally take place within 20 working school days or if it is likely to take longer a letter will be sent stating the anticipated response time.

The Headteacher will follow up any meeting with parents by summarising the main points in a letter. This is to avoid any misunderstanding and ensure that all parties have a clear record of progress or agreements made.

When the Headteacher gives their final response it will advise the parent of Stage 2 of the formal complaints process if the parent remains dissatisfied.

Stage 2

Parents will write to the Chair of Governors c/o Poulner Junior School, outlining their complaint and explaining the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Headteacher's response and any relevant paperwork. Should parents need support in making a written complaint, they have the option of dictating their complaint to a member of the office staff.

The Chair will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response within five working school days.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Chair will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual. Normal practice is to investigate the complaint and prepare a response within 20 working school days.

This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties. The Chair will decide who is responsible for dealing with the issues involved and therefore what powers are available to governors with respect to the particular complaint.

If the matter relates to delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the Governing Body, the Chair will look at the whole issue afresh.

If the matter relates to the Headteacher's' conduct, the Chair may decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the complaints procedure or staff disciplinary procedure. Advice will be sought from the Local Authority complaints adviser or education personnel services.

If the matter relates to an issue which is the Headteacher's responsibility, the Chair is only empowered to look at whether the Headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.

If a parent is unhappy with the outcome from the Chair of Governors they may request an appeal hearing by the Governing Body's complaints panel.

Stage 3

Parents who wish to appeal to the Governing Body Complaints Panel should request this in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body. The letter should describe the issues in detail and say why you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the previous stages.

The Panel will consist of three governors who have had no previous involvement in the matter who will act impartially.

A hearing will be set up and the complainant will be notified of the date and location at least 5 days in advance. The complainant has a right to attend the hearing and may bring a friend, legal representative or interpreter. The Head teacher or their representative will also attend.

The Governors Complaints Panel will follow the procedure and advice as outlined in Appendix 2 (Checklist for a Governors Complaints Panel Hearing).

The powers available to the Governors remain the same as those outlined within Stage 2.

The Panel will send its written decision to the complainant and the Headteacher within fifteen school working days of the hearing. If a parent is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal the only recourse is to the Secretary of State for Education, although it may be helpful for parents to seek advice from the Local Education Authority complaints adviser first.

Stage 4

The LA offers a further right of appeal for parents if the complaint is about:

- The National Curriculum and related matters
- Provision of collective worship and religious education

The Secretary of State will contact the Governing Body and LA for more information. The Secretary of State has the power to direct the school to revise an action using the same criteria as applied by the governors.

There may be occasions when despite all stages of the procedures having been followed the complainant may remain dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, the correspondence will be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.

In dealing with vexatious, abusive and anonymous complaints the school will follow advice from the Local Authority.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Headteacher is responsible for the formal complaints records and holds them in a central file.

The records must include:

- Who was involved
- When and what the issue was
- The action taken
- The complaints conclusion

The Headteacher will report termly through the Headteacher's Report to Governors on the number of formal complaints received and the level at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complainant or member of staff will be published.

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the policy and to make changes where necessary.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints may contribute to wider school improvement as individual complaints may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints is a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

Appendix 1
Poulner Junior School
Complaint Procedure Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of the complaint below:

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 of complaint sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2
Poulner Junior School
Checklist for a Governors Complaints Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing, while structured, is conducted as informally as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give 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 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 responses to the complaint.
- The Chair of the Governors explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set timescale.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.

STAGED APPROACH TO HANDLING COMPLAINTS

