



Complaints Policy

Review date October 2019

Mortimer Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Mortimer Primary School aims to provide an excellent level of education and care for the children, families and wider community that it serves. We welcome feedback about our successes and strengths, and also about those aspects of our work that are less successful. We try to serve as efficiently and as courteously as possible, but acknowledge that there are occasions when we will fall short of the standards that are expected. We welcome comments and complaints as an opportunity to improve the quality of our provision.

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services by the school. Certain types of complaint fall outside the scope of this policy and these are detailed in Appendix 3. Please note that the school will not investigate complaints made anonymously.

It is useful for the purposes of this policy to make a distinction between a concern and a complaint:

- A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, for which reassurances are being sought.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about decisions taken or a lack of action by the school.

We believe that open and honest communication between home and school is the best way for us to meet the needs of the children and families that we work with. Our aim is for the vast majority of concerns to be dealt with quickly and easily, thus avoiding the need to go through a formal complaints procedure.

Procedures: how we deal with concerns and complaints

Stage 1

Any concern should be discussed in the first instance with the relevant member of staff. This will usually be the child's class teacher, although it could be another member of staff such as the Headteacher or Deputy. Staff can be contacted by telephone, e mail, in writing or in person. This is usually best done through the school office, although it is often possible to catch the class teacher at the end of the school day when they are handing the children over. The Head and / or Deputy are more likely to have some availability during the school day.

Stage 2

The procedure moves to Stage 2 if it is felt that the concern has not been resolved informally at Stage 1. The concern is now regarded as a complaint, and is subject to a formal investigation by the Headteacher, or by another senior member of staff if this is preferred. The person making the complaint needs to explain what the complaint is about, and what action they would like the

school to take to put things right. The member of staff will then investigate the complaint in an impartial way and let the complainant know the outcome within five working days of receiving the request. If the person is still not satisfied with the outcome they may choose to go to stage 3.

Stage 3

The final stage is to make a request for an investigation by the Complaints Appeals Committee of the school's Governing Body. This Committee is made up of a number of School Governors, none of whom are employed by the school. Its role is to conduct an independent review of the complaint, not to rubber stamp previous decisions.

A complaint can be registered with the Governing Body by completing the attached form (Appendix 1). The form can be handed in to the school office or sent in the post. It should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and marked 'Confidential'. Alternatively the complaint can be made in person or by telephone, and a member of school admin staff will use the form to record the details, before passing them on to the Chair of Governors. The complainant will receive a written acknowledgment of the complaint within two working days of it being received by the Chair of Governors.

The complaint will be checked first of all to make sure that it can be dealt with. If it can't be dealt with then the complainant will be sent a letter explaining this decision and the reasons why it has been made.

After it has been established that the complaint can be heard, the complainant will be provided with a set of the procedures followed by the Complaints Appeals Committee. These procedures include a meeting of the committee which the complainant can choose to attend in person, or to present evidence to in writing.

After the Complaints Appeals Committee has completed its work the complainant will receive a written report setting out the committee's decision, together with any action proposed to remedy the situation. This report will be sent within 21 days of the complaint being received by the Chair of Governors.

Resolving Complaints

The process of resolving the complaint will usually include identifying areas of agreement between the parties, and clarifying any misunderstandings that might have occurred.

Other possible outcomes may include one or more of the following:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is justified;
- 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;
- dismissal of the complaint in whole or in part.

An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Time Frames for Registering Complaints

The expectation is that a complaint will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises. This makes the process of investigating and resolving the complaint in a timely manner easier to achieve. However any complaint lodged within 3 months of the issue occurring will be considered.

Complaints about the Headteacher or Chair of Governors

Complaints about the Headteacher are dealt with at Stage 2 by the Chair of Governors. Any complaints about the Chair of Governors will be dealt with by the Headteacher, Vice Chair of Governors or external independent person depending upon the circumstances.

Record Keeping and Follow-Up Action

A record is kept of each complaint received and the outcome of the investigation. It also includes brief notes of meetings and telephone calls which can be referred to at a later date if there is any challenge or disagreement over what was said. Complainants have the right to see copies of these records on request.

The Governing Body receives a report on the number and general nature of complaints received each term, although the details of each individual complaint remain confidential. This information is used by the Governing Body to inform discussions about how effectively the school operates and whether there are ways in which the quality of the school's work can be improved.

There may 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 the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the school considers the matter closed.

Appendix 2 outlines the circumstances in which the school will consider a complaint to be unreasonable and how this will be managed.

Appendix 3 outlines the complaints not covered in this policy.

Approved by Governing Body October 2016
Review Date October 2019

Appendix 1

Name of complainant:

Pupil's name:

Relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Contact telephone numbers (day time / evening):

Please give details of your complaint (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

What would you like the school to do to put things right?

What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 2

Mortimer Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Mortimer Primary School defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
 - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
 - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
 - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
 - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
 - makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
 - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
 - repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
 - refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
 - seeks an unrealistic outcome;
 - makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email or telephone
- A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so

either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as on social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the school site.

Appendix 3 Complaints not covered by this policy

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation 	<p>Concerns would be raised direct with local authorities (LA)</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the School or the LA)</p> <p>Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman</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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>School have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD</p> <p>The Department of Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>These matters will invoke the School's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</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. They should be contacted direct.</p>