



Lyng Church of England Primary School Complaints Policy

Review Body:	Governor Committee
Responsibility:	Headteacher
Type of Policy:	Statutory
Review Period:	Every 3 years
Reviewed:	September 2018
Next Review:	September 2021

All schools in Norfolk want their pupils to be healthy, happy and safe, and to achieve. They recognise that parents, guardians or carers play an important part in making this happen. Cooperation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in the school.

We strive to be a school where you are more than satisfied with what we do to support your child, especially in difficult situations. When you think we do this particularly well, please let us know. Staff work hard for the pupils and we all want to recognise that. But sometimes things may not go well. For example, you may feel that your child is being bullied and are not happy that the right things have been done to address this. We hope that good communication would solve such a problem. Our aim is that by careful listening, constructive discussion and sensible actions we can work together to solve problems, and so improve our school systems further. But if the problem persists, you may wish to make a complaint.

Each level of the procedure set out below offers the opportunity for concerns and complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Level 1 – informal

Parents, carers or guardians should, in the first instance, make an appointment to speak to the class teacher about the concern. It is best to resolve issues at this point.

Guidance on informal level 1:

- Concerns should initially be handled informally in a manner that offers the best way of resolving issues.
- A class teacher should offer an appointment to discuss the issue as quickly as possible, as this will give both parties time to talk about it calmly and politely without being interrupted. This can allow parties to remain calm. This process ensures a joint commitment to resolving issues.
- It is important for parents to recognise that schools are busy organisations and that it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away.
- The parties involved should be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.

Level 2 - informal

Parents/carers dissatisfied with the result of the discussions with the class teacher should ask for an appointment to meet with the headteacher.

Guidance on informal level 2:

- It is always best to resolve issues informally at the earliest possible time but if the person is not satisfied with the result of the talk with the teacher, then he/she can ask for an appointment to meet with the Headteacher.

- It is in everyone's interest, particularly the child or children, for concerns and complaints to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.
- The aim should be that discussions end on a positive note with no bad feeling.
- The headteacher will write a letter to parents summarising what has been agreed regarding the issue.

It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved by this point.

Level 3 – Formal letter to the Headteacher

An issue that has not been resolved through the informal levels 1 and 2 can become an official complaint.

Parents/ carers wishing to move to level 3 must write a formal letter of complaint to the headteacher. The letter will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent/carer considers the issue to be unresolved.

The letter should also outline the resolution which they are seeking. The Headteacher should consider the complaint and investigate as appropriate before writing to the complainant outlining his/her findings. The Headteacher should respond in writing 10 school days of receipt of the letter.

Guidance on level 3- formal:

- An unresolved issue can now move to a formal complaint. This is a serious step to be taken. In consideration of future home/school relationships everyone concerned will need to negotiate an agreement and concentrate on finding a resolution to the issue.

If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved he/she should proceed to Level 4, a Governors' Complaints Panel.

Level 4 – formal complaint requesting a Governors' Complaints Panel.

Time Scales:

Receipt of complainant's letter	Acknowledgement within 5 school days
Receipt of complainant's letter	Governors' Panel meeting within 15 school days (unless this goes into school holidays)
Written documentation sent to Governors' Panel Members and complainant and headteacher	5 school days before meeting.
Governors' Panel members decision communicated to all concerned	As soon as possible but within 10 school days of meeting.

Complainants wishing to move to level 4 of the formal complaints procedure will need to write a letter to the Chair of Governors to request that a Governors' Complaints Panel meets to hear the complaint. This formal complaint letter must be received within 10 school days of the last meeting with the headteacher concerning the issue. The complainant should write to the Chair of Governors at the school address marking the envelope 'urgent and confidential'. The letter will need to set out the complaint that has previously been informally considered and formally discussed with the headteacher and show why the matter is not resolved.

Before the meeting:

The chair of governors should appoint a clerk to the Governors' Complaints Panel, acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of receipt and arrange for a panel of governors to meet within 15 school days of receipt. It must be recognised that if the letter is received within 14 school days to the end of term it may not be possible to organise the governors' panel meeting. In this case the matter should be dealt with within 10 school days of the school reopening.

The headteacher should be given a copy of the complainant's letter and written documentation should be requested from the school. The clerk should send both the complainant's letter and the school documentation to the Governors' Complaints Panel members, complainant and headteacher (and anyone else involved in the meeting) at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The complainant and headteacher will be invited to attend the Governor's Complaints Panel meeting to give a verbal statement in support of their documentation. Each of them can bring someone to support them if they wish, however, this person will not be permitted to contribute to the meeting.

Members of the Complaints Panel, of which there should be three, should have no prior knowledge of the complaint and it is, therefore, unlikely that staff governors will be members of the panel. The Chair of Governors may wish to exclude certain governors from participating in the panel due to them having a possible interest in the focus of the complaint.

One member of the Complaints Panel must be independent of the management and running of the school.

At the meeting:

The complainant and headteacher (or his representative) should provide all the relevant information they wish and the Governors' Complaints Panel members should clarify any points. After the complainant and headteacher (or his representative) have provided all the information they wish, the chair will ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk.

Guidance on Level 4 Formal complaints Panel

- Although this is a formal meeting, every effort should be made to make it as informal as possible for all concerned.
 - Consideration may need to be given to the seating arrangements to make everyone feel equal and comfortable.
 - The clerk should take notes of the meeting, listing who is present: Members of the Complaints Panel, stating who is the chair of the Panel, the Headteacher (or his/her representative), the Parents/carers and anyone accompanying them e.g. friend, the Clerk.
 - The chair of the Complaints Panel should open the meeting stating the purpose and the format of the meeting to clarify this to all in attendance.
 - People present should introduce themselves stating their reason for being at the meeting
 - The chair of the Complaints Panel should request a verbal statement from the complainant in support of his or her written letter of complaint and why s/he feels the issue has not been resolved. The Complaints Panel members can ask questions to make sure they understand the issue from the parent's point of view.
 - The chair of the Complaints Panel should request a verbal statement from the Headteacher (or her representative) in support of his/her written account of the complaint and the steps taken to resolve the issue. The Complaints Panel members can ask questions to make sure they understand the issue from the Headteacher's point of view.
 - The members of the Complaints Panel should make sure they fully understand the issues and ask any further questions to clarify any points that are still not clear to them.
 - The chair of the Complaints Panel must ask the complainant and the Headteacher (or his/her representative) if they are satisfied that they have provided all the information they wanted or if there is something they wish to add and if they feel they have had a fair hearing.

After the meeting:

The Complaints Panel members then discuss the issues in private and the clerk remains to record the decision.

- The Panel members will need to consider the information then come to a decision and suggest a way to resolve the issue, taking into account the best interests of the child or children.
- When the Panel have reached a decision the Clerk will inform everyone concerned in writing as soon as possible, but in any event, within 10 working days of the panel meeting.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

Once a Complaints Panel has heard a complaint, and it is clear that correct procedures have been followed, that specific complaint cannot be reopened. If a request is received in this respect, the chair of governors should inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

The decision of the Governors' Complaints Panel will not be investigated. However if the complainant feels that the School and Governors have not followed the school's complaints procedure correctly, he/she can contact a Children's Services Officer for assistance. In this case he/she should ring Customer Services on 0844 800 8001 who will arrange for an officer to get back to him/her.

Chapter 3, paragraph 14 of a Guide to the Law for School Governors states: under the Education Act 1996, paragraphs 496 and 497, anyone can complain to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he or she believes that a governing body is acting "unreasonably" or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly. However, intervention can only occur if the governing body or the Local Authority has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted "unreasonably" in the performance of a duty. Intervention would have to be expedient in the sense that there would have to be something that the Secretary of State for Education and Skills could instruct either party to do to put matters right.

Concerns or complaints specifically about the headteacher.

If, the concern or complaint is specifically about the headteacher and is unable to be resolved at the informal stage, then it will be necessary for the complainant to formally complain to the Chair of Governors. The school will provide the Chair of Governor's name and the complainant should write to him or her at the school address marking the envelope 'urgent, private and confidential'. The Chair of Governors should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of receipt and contact a Governor Support Service Officer for advice.

NB The decision that the headteacher has made as a result of the complaint does not become a complaint about the headteacher.

Concerns or complaints specifically about a member of the school staff

Any complaints concerning the conduct of school staff will be handled in accordance with the schools internal disciplinary procedures. The details of such an investigation will remain confidential.

Some complaints regarding admissions, the curriculum or special educational needs are covered by statutory regulations. Issues or advice can be sought from the Customer Service Centre on 0844 800 8001 or e-mail: information@norfolk.gov.uk

Extended Schools: the governing body should ensure that any third party provider offering contracted activities and services through the extended schools programme has their own complaints procedure in place. Complaints made to the school about a third party provider will be

referred to the provider. Governors would need to have a discussion around, and make a decision about, what happens when the third party provider's complaints process is exhausted and the matter is not resolved and whether it should then be referred to a Governors' Complaints Panel. This would ensure that the Governors are kept aware of complaints about provision.

Appendix 1 – Summary Complaints procedure – for office display and school brochure
Appendix 2 – Flowchart



Appendix 2 : How to make a complaint:

Our aim is that by careful listening, constructive discussion and sensible actions we can work together to solve problems, and so improve our school systems further. But if the problem persists, you may wish to make a complaint.

For your concerns to be heard and dealt with effectively please follow these steps:-

Stage 1 – Informal Stage: Before making an official complaint, make an appointment with your child's teacher to sit down and discuss your concern. They may be able to take direct action to sort out the problem. Complaints from members of the community are to be addressed to a member of the business support staff.

If you are not satisfied that enough has been done, and you have tried to discuss your concerns then you need to tell the teacher that you intend to take the complaint to the next level and involve the Headteacher.

We hope you can reach an agreement that resolves your concern satisfactorily for you and the school; please give them time to take action.

Stage 2 Informal stage

Having given the class teacher time to act on your concerns, if you feel it has not been sorted out to your satisfaction, you will need to arrange an appointment to speak to the headteacher. You will need to discuss the matter with him / her explaining your complaint and what you would like to happen to put the matter right.

Stage 3 Formal Stage

If your concerns continue to be unresolved, you will need to write a formal letter of complaint to the Headteacher. Having investigated your concern, the Headteacher will then inform you, in writing of any action being taken, within 10 school days.

Stage 4 Formal Stage

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Headteacher then you can write to the Chair of Governors requesting that a Governor's Complaints Panel is set up. The Governing Body will nominate 3 governors to hear your complaint. The meeting will take place within 15 working days of receipt of your complaint. You will be notified of the panel's decision within 10 working days.

We always seek to solve problems informally and as quickly as possible.
We are committed to all members of the school community being treated with respect and courtesy.

A full copy of the complaints policy is obtainable on the school website

Appendix 1 :Flowchart of procedure for handling concerns and complaints:

