Wood End Primary School

Complaints Policy

Committee with oversight of this policy	Behaviour, Ethos & Wellbeing
Policy last reviewed	January 2025
Policy due for review	January 2027

Mission Statement
Wood End Primary School provides a world class education through which all children can develop their full potential, gain a sense of self-worth and prepare for adult life in a happy, secure and caring environment.

Introduction

We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the academy is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the academy will follow in such cases.

If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the academy, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher as soon as possible.

We deal with all concerns and complaints in accordance with procedures laid down by the DfE. If the academy cannot resolve your concerns and complaints to your satisfaction you have a right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

Overview

Wood End Primary School Governors define a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction made about actions taken or a lack of action, which may relate to a major or minor issue'. 'Action' relates to Wood End Primary School's statutory duty to comply with legislations in safeguarding, equality, educational equity, educational access, and educational standards and expectations. We take our professional standards and statutory responsibilities very seriously and, at all times, strive to provide an outstanding service.

The Home School Agreement outlines (though not exclusively) to our parents their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the school. Much of Wood End Primary School's day to day expectations, both for the school and parents, can be identified in these documents. In this context we will initially use this as a guide as to whether your dissatisfaction falls within the remit of the school's formal complaints procedure.

It is in everyone's interests that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Wood End Primary School does take informal concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, and we would expect our parents to also work together with us towards a resolution.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns and complaints formally. In those cases, the academy's complaints procedure can address these through the stages outlined below.

When lodging a concern or a complaint with Wood End Primary School, at each stage, you will be required to state clearly what your complaint is and how you think it should be remedied (the preferred resolution). If you do not do so, the complaint could be viewed as vexatious.

Disagreements and criticisms relating to preferences, personal interests, or opinions may not constitute grounds for a complaint.

Our aim is to maintain high standards of service, if we have not done so, we would want the issue to be dealt with as quickly as possible, hopefully to the satisfaction of both parties.

Aims and Objectives

Wood End Primary School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

The Complaints Process

Stage 1: Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally

If a parent or guardian is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at the school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. This meeting should be arranged by the school office at a time which is mutually agreeable for you and the teacher concerned.

In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress. They naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

Although this stage involves dealing with the issue informally, it may prove helpful later, although it is not essential at this stage, for the person responding to make a basic record of the issue or complaint raised. The person who raised the issue should be informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue- either verbally or in writing.

Complaints and concerns should be raised with the school as soon as possible after an incident arises. Concerns and complaints made after 3 months of the initial incident occurring will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances which delayed the complaint or concern being made. If this is a matter of professional wrongdoing or health and safety of a child, we would expect a complaint or concern to be raised immediately upon being brought to a parent's attention.

Once a complaint has been initiated, both parties are expected to adhere to the timeline in this policy. If the timeline is not adhered to, your complaint may be timed out and considered as closed.

Timeline: A meeting for a parent with a teacher to discuss a complaint or concern should be made within 10 school days.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response they have been given, they should be provided with a copy of the school's Complaints Procedure and informed about how to take their complaint to Stage 2 by referring it to the Deputy Head, usually in writing (although it can be verbally conveyed.)

Timeline: Complaints and concerns should be referred to the Deputy Head within 15 school days of the Stage 1 response being received.

Stage 2: Referral to the Deputy Head- Informal

At this stage it is important to establish exactly what the complaint or concern is, and what the complainant's preferred resolution would be. The complaint details should be kept as concise as possible. The complaint can be made in writing or verbally.

Once a complaint or concern is received by the Deputy Head an investigation will occur.

Complainants should also be given the opportunity to meet with the Deputy Head, accompanied by a relative or friend if they so wish, to discuss their complaint.

Timeline: The Deputy Head will try to arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint or concern within 10 school days. Proceedings may be delayed if sufficient information or evidence is not provided by the complainant, when requested.

Although this stage involves dealing with the issue informally, it may prove helpful later, although is not essential at this stage, for the person responding to make a basic record of the issue or complaint raised. The person who raised the issue should be informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue- either verbally or in writing.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response they have been given, they will be informed about how to take their complaint to Stage 3, by referring it to the Headteacher, usually in writing.

Timeline: Complaints and concerns should be referred to the Headteacher within 15 school days of the Stage 2 response being received.

Stage 3: Referral to the Headteacher- Informal

At this stage it is, again, important to establish exactly what the complaint or concern is, and what the complainant's preferred resolution would be. The complaint details should be kept as concise as possible. The complaint should be made in writing where possible.

The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly; most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. It is generally at this or the previous stage that it will become clear whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be dealt with under these procedures or whether it falls under the remit of another organisation. If the latter is the case, the Headteacher will need to inform the complainant of this and the way in which the complaint will be handled.

Timeline: At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. Any complaint received by the Headteacher under this process, whether orally or in writing, should be acknowledged within 5 school days with a full written response within 15 school days of receipt of complaint. Proceedings may be delayed if sufficient information or evidence is not provided by the complainant, when requested.

Complainants should also be given the opportunity to meet with the Headteacher, accompanied by a relative or friend if they so wish, to discuss their complaint. Written records of interviews with complainants and with staff or witnesses carried out in the course of the investigation should be kept by the Headteacher.

In the letter conveying the outcome, the complainant should be informed of the process for referral to the Chair of Governors if they wish to take their complaint further.

Timeline: Complaints and concerns should be referred to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of the response from the Headteacher being received (Stage 3 response).

Stage 4: Referred to the Chair of Governors - Formal

The complainant requests a review of their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of Governors, care of the academy. The complainant must make it clear why they are complaining, who they have already spoken to and what they want to happen as a result of their complaint. The letter should be handed in at the academy office for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

Timeline: Complaints received by the Chair should be acknowledged within 7 school days with a substantive response within 28 school days. The Chair may request further information from the complainant as part of their investigation. Proceedings may be delayed if sufficient information or evidence is not provided by the complainant, when requested.

In acknowledging any complaint, the Chair may need to explain the powers of the Governing Body over the matter in question, and the extent to which it may or may not be possible to achieve the outcome desired by the complainant. In such instances it is important that the complainant is made aware at the outset of the scope of the investigation. However, where it is not within the remit of a Governing Body to change a decision, it may make a recommendation for the Headteacher to consider.

The Chair may need to hold interviews with the Headteacher and possibly other members of staff and notes should be kept of those meetings. The Chair may also wish to take advice on particular issues from the academy Legal Advisor.

After hearing all the evidence, the Chair of Governors will consider their decision and inform the complainant in writing. The Chair of Governors will do all that they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction. The letter conveying the Chair's findings should include details of the next stage of the procedure (Stage 5).

If the Chair of Governors can not come to a conclusion that will satisfy both parties the complainant can take the complaint to Stage 5.

Timeline: The complainant must inform the Chair of Governors, in writing, that they wish to take the complaint to Stage 5. This request must be made within 10 school days of the response letter from the Chair of Governors (Stage 4 response).

Stage 5: Review by Governing Body Complaints Committee - Formal

Complaints rarely reach this formal level, but it is important that the Governing Body is prepared to deal with them when necessary.

Timeline: Where the Chair of Governors receives a complaint under these procedures, they should arrange for a Complaints Committee to meet between 12 and 20 school days from receipt of the letter. Proceedings may be delayed if sufficient information or evidence is not provided by the complainant, when requested.

The Governing Body will nominate three members to serve on the committee, with reserves, to ensure that sufficient Governors are available to hold a meeting within the specified time period.

None of the three Complaints Committee members will have been involved in the matters which gave rise to the complaint, have been involved in dealing with the complaint previously, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint. Two of the Complaints Committee members may (but do not have to) be Governors. The third Complaints Committee member will be independent of the management and running of the Academy, i.e. they will not be a member of staff or a Governor or a parent of a student at the Academy.

When considering the membership of the Complaints Committee, the Governing Body should consider whether it would be advisable to include Governors who are employed at the academy. If this were the case, it may be perceived by the complainant that those Governors would be unlikely to amend or overturn a decision taken by the Headteacher.

In those circumstances, the complainant might regard this as grounds to complain to the Secretary of State. The

members of the committee should elect one of their number to act as Chair of the Committee for the hearing.

The Chair of Governors should not be a member of the committee as they will have been involved at the previous stage.

The Headteacher should also be informed immediately that a complaint has been received and consulted about the proposed date of the hearing.

Timeline: On issuing notification of the date and time of the hearing, the Clerk will need to advise the complainant and the Headteacher that any written documentation they wish the Complaints Committee to consider will need to be submitted in time to be circulated to committee members 5 days prior to the hearing. The complainant should be advised that they may be accompanied by a relative or friend.

Procedure at the Complaints Committee Hearing

The Complaints Committee Hearing will be conducted as follows:

- The clerk to the complaints committee will greet the complainant, the complainant's supporter (if present) and the school's representative and welcome them into the room where the complaints committee has convened (any witnesses will remain outside of the room until they are called in to give their account);
- The complainant will be invited by the complaints committee to give an account of their complaint;
- The school's representative will be invited to ask the complainant questions, if any;
- The complaints committee will ask the complainant questions, if any;
- At the discretion of the chair of the complaints committee, the complainant's first witness will be invited into the room to give an account of what they saw or know;
- The school's representative will be invited to ask the complainant's witness questions, if any;
- The complaints committee will ask the complainant's witness questions, if any;
- The complainant's witness will be asked to leave the room;
- If the complainant has any further relevant witnesses, at the discretion of the chair of the complaints committee, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned as outlined above;
- The school's representative will be invited by the complaints committee to respond to the complaint and make representations on behalf of the school;
- The complainant will be invited to ask the school's representative questions, if any;
- The complaints committee will ask the school's representative questions, if any;
- At the discretion of the chair of the complaints committee, the school's relevant first witness will be invited into the room to give an account or what they saw or know;
- The complainant will be invited to ask the school's witness questions, if any;
- The complaints committee will ask the school's witness questions, if any;
- The school's witness will be asked to leave the room;
- If the school has any further relevant witnesses, at the discretion of the chair of the complaints committee, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned, as outlined above;
- The complainant will be invited by the complaints committee to summarise their complaint;
- The school's representative will be invited by the complaints committee to summarise their response to the complaint and the school's stance;
- The complaints committee Hearing will conclude and the complainant and the school's representative will be asked to leave.

The Complaints Committee's Decision

The Complaints Committee will convene in private, either immediately after the Complaints Committee Hearing or on a subsequent date, and will consider all of the documentation and everything that they have heard at the Complaints Committee Hearing and make:

- **Findings of Fact**

  The Complaints Committee will decide which facts are established to be true, on a balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not). If a fact is not deemed relevant, the Complaints Committee will not consider it further. The Complaints Committee will make a written record of the facts that have been established, those which have not been established and those which are not relevant, with their reasons for making these findings.

- **Recommendations**

  The Complaints Committee will consider the facts which they have established and will make recommendations based upon them. These recommendations may be aimed at achieving reconciliation between the parties (for example, a written apology), improving procedures or preventing a recurrence in the future. The Complaints Committee will keep a written record of their recommendations, with reasons.

Notification of the Complaints Committee's Decision

The Clerk to the Governors will write within 5 school days of the Complaints Committee Hearing to the:

- Complainant;
- the School's Representative;
- Any person complained about;

The letter will identify each of the issues complained about, summarise how the Complaints Committee Hearing proceeded, and confirm each of the Complaints Committee's findings of fact and recommendations, if any, with reasons. The letter will also confirm that, if the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or that the Academy has not followed the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may refer their complaint to the Education Funding Agency for further consideration.

Timeline: The findings of the Complaints Committee should be notified to the complainant and the Headteacher in writing within 5 school days of the hearing.

Further Recourse

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Governing Body's handling of their complaint, further recourse to other agencies is available to them outside the scope of the academy's own procedures. However, these agencies would be unable to take any action until the academy's own procedures had been completed.

The Role of the Education Funding Agency (EFA)

The EFA can support the academy to achieve a complaints procedure, but it is the responsibility of the school to make sure that their complaints procedure is fully compliant. The EFA's responsibility is to ensure the school complies with their funding agreements.

If a complaint goes to them they will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. They will consider complaints about school that fall into any of the following three areas:

1. Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
2. Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
3. Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.
4. They will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly they will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

If the school's complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, they will ask the academy to put this right. They may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

Complainants have a right of appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills under sections 496 or 497 of the 1996 Education Act, if they believe that the school has acted unreasonably. The Secretary of State would not take action until the school procedures have been completed.

Monitoring and Review

The Governors monitor the complaints procedures, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

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

Timeline

Stage	**Complainant**	**Academy**
Stage 1- Informal	Concerns or complaints to be raised within 3 months of initial incident (unless there are exceptional circumstances)	Meeting with the class teacher arranged within 10 school days of request.
Stage 2- Informal	Refer complaint or concern to a Deputy Head within 15 school days of Stage 1 response. Complaint or concern to be made in a concise way with a preferred resolution included or proceedings cannot continue A friend, relative or advisor can accompany you to the meeting.	Meeting with a Deputy Headteacher arranged within 10 school days after complaint is received Investigation held Verbal or written response to be provided to the complainant.
Stage 3- Informal	Refer complaint or concern in writing, where	Complaint acknowledged within 5 school

	possible, to Headteacher within 15 school days of stage 2 response. Complaint or concern to be made in a concise way with a preferred resolution included or proceedings cannot continue. A friend, relative or advisor can accompany you to the meeting.	days. Meeting with the Headteacher arranged within 10 school days after a complaint is received. Investigation held with written evidence produced. Headteacher to write full response to complaint within 15 school days.
Stage 4- Formal	Refer complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receipt of stage 3 response. Complaint to be made in a concise way with a preferred resolution included or proceedings cannot continue.	Complaint acknowledged within 7 school days. Investigation held with written evidence produced. Legal advice sought if necessary. Chair of Governors to write a full response to complaint within 28 school days.
Stage 5- Formal	Request, in writing, that the complaint is taken to the Complaints Committee within 10 school days of the stage 4 response. Any written documentation you wish to be presented to the Complaints Committee must be submitted in time to be circulated to the committee members 5 days prior to the hearing. A friend, relative or advisor can accompany you to the meeting.	Chair of Governors to arrange for a Complaints Committee to be formed. CEFM to be contacted for advice. Committee to meet within 12-20 days of receipt of letter. Findings of the committee to be notified to the complainant and Headteacher within 5 school days.