



Complaints Policy

December 2021

Review: December 2024

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be a cursive representation of a name.

Chair of Governors

**Policy and Procedure for Handling
Concerns and Complaints
at Little Melton Primary**

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Introduction

Governors and staff of Little Melton Primary School want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe, and to achieve. We 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 understand that anyone who has an involvement with the school may have a concern or complaint, and our policy enables concerns or complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible. Our procedure includes informal and formal stages to expedite this.

We believe that the word “complaint” should be restricted to situations which are being formally investigated, and encourage language such as “concerns” or “clarification” which may be more conducive towards resolving matters informally and more quickly. We encourage parents, guardians or carers, or anyone else with a concern or complaint to identify what they think would resolve the situation.

Background

Section 29 of the Education Act (2002) requires all local authority maintained schools to produce and make available a procedure to deal with concerns or complaints related to the school or any community facilities provided by the school. In January 2016 the Department for Education (DfE) published a non-statutory guidance document entitled “Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016”. This Policy and Procedure for Handling Concerns and Complaints has been written in the spirit of this document.

Good practice

Our Policy and Procedure adheres to the following principles of good practice:

Methods of communication

Complaints and concerns can be communicated in writing or by using alternative methods of communication as appropriate for individual

Record keeping

Notes of meetings and telephone conversations will form part of the record of the concern or complaint;

Consideration will be given to recording conversations when appropriate, subject to permission being given from all parties involved;

All stages of the procedure will be documented in a single file held centrally by the person designated as the complaints co-ordinator;

All records will be subject to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts. Content will therefore be factual and objective.

Need to know

If anyone initially makes a governor aware of a concern or complaint, the governor will advise them to follow the school's complaints procedure. The governor will advise the Chair of Governors of this without providing details of the concern or complaint. The governor will have no further involvement in the process.

If a concern or complaint is shared with the entire governing board, arrangements will be made for governors from other schools to become involved in the process.

Areas outside the scope of the complaints procedure

Exceptions

School admissions
Statutory assessments of special educational needs
School re-organisation proposals
Matters likely to require a child protection investigation

Who to contact

Concerns should be raised direct with the local authority.
Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Exclusion from school

Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions

Whistleblowing

The school has a whistleblowing procedure for employees and volunteers. Other concerns can be raised with Ofsted on 0300 123 3155 or whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
The DfE is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures

The school has grievance and disciplinary procedures for employees. Complainants will not be informed of outcomes. Organisations should have their own complaints procedures and should be contacted direct.

Complaints about services provided by organisations who use school premises of facilities

Serial and persistent complaints

Governors and staff of Little Melton Primary School will do their best to be helpful to anyone who contacts them with a complaint or concern. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and the matter is therefore closed, but will invite them to refer the matter to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State's authority to deal with school complaints has been delegated to the School Complaints Unit (SCU). The SCU will only take action if it considers the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. Contact details are as follows: telephone on 0370 000 2288; via email www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus; and in writing to DfE, School Complaints Unit, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

The DfE does not use the term "vexatious" for serial or persistent communications, but it is a recognised term in Freedom of Information requests. The term "serial" or "persistent" concerns the subject of the complaint rather than the complainant.

General principles of the procedure

To allow parents, guardians or carers or anyone else who has an involvement with the school to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides.

Anonymous concerns or complaints will not be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Concerns and complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible.

Concerns and complaints raised more than three months after the event will not be considered.

Stages of the procedure

Informal stage

Individuals should initially communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. An appointment to meet with the member of staff can be made in writing, by telephone or in person. An appointment to discuss your concern will be offered as quickly as possible. Many concerns can be resolved by a discussion which clarifies the provision of information or recognises that in some instances something could have been handled better. Individuals will be encouraged to identify what they think would resolve the situation. It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved at this informal stage. A Meeting Request Form can be found at Appendix 1 of this Policy and

Procedure, but you can use any form of communication which is appropriate for you.

Serious concerns or complaints can be addressed directly with the Headteacher - or with the Chair of Governors if the concern or complaint is about the Headteacher. If you are not sure who to contact, seek advice from the school office or the clerk to the governing board.

Formal stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, you can either put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher, or make an appointment to speak to him. An appointment to meet with the Headteacher can be made in writing, by telephone or in person, and will be offered as quickly as possible.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, your complaint should be passed to the Chair of Governors either via the school office via the clerk to the governing board.

A Formal Complaint Form can be found at Appendix 2 of this Policy and Procedure, but you can use any form of communication which is appropriate for you. You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. To make it easier to proceed, you should include a clear statement of the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your complaint. If you choose to use the form, pass it in a sealed envelope to the school office, addressed to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors as appropriate.

The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaint and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend to help you explain the nature of your complaint.

If your complaint is not resolved through this meeting, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will arrange for the complaint to be fully investigated. The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will either write to you, or communicate with you as appropriate, within 5 school days of the receipt of your formal complaint, indicating how the school intends to proceed, and what the anticipated timescale is. The investigation will begin as soon as possible and the outcome will be communicated to you in writing, or another method as appropriate.

If you are not satisfied with the process which has been followed in handling your complaint, you may request that the governing board reviews the process followed. A Complaint Review Request Form can be found at Appendix 3 of this Policy and Procedure. You must ask for a review, in writing, or using a method of communication appropriate for you, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, stating why you are not satisfied with the way the process was carried out.

Review process

The review process will be conducted by a panel of three members of the governing board, and will usually take place within 15 school days of the receipt of your request.

Before the meeting the Chair of Governors should appoint a clerk to the panel, acknowledge your request for a review in writing, or using a method of communication appropriate for you, within 5 school days of receipt and arrange for the panel to meet within 15 school days of receipt. If your request for a review is received within 14 days of the end of term it may not be possible to organise the panel meeting, in which case the panel will meet within 10 school days of the school reopening.

The Headteacher will be given a copy of your request for a review and will be asked to provide the records of the complaint. The clerk will send you, the Headteacher and the panel members a copy of all the documentation at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting, along with a formal invitation to attend. Both you and the Headteacher can bring someone for support.

At the meeting you and the Headteacher should provide all the relevant information and the panel members will clarify any points. The Chair will then ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk.

After the meeting the panel will write to all concerned within 10 school days to explain their decision and suggest a resolution to the problem, if appropriate. The decision of the panel is final.

The decision of the panel will not be investigated. If, however, you feel that the school and governors have not followed the school's complaints procedure correctly, you can contact a Children's Services Officer for assistance. In this case you should ring the local authority Customer Services on 0844 800 8020 who will arrange for an officer to get back to you.

The decision of the panel is final. However, if you feel the school's governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably you can complain to the Secretary of State.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Meeting Request Form.

Appendix 2. Formal Complaint Form.

Appendix 3. Complaint Review Request Form.