

Mason Moor Primary School



Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Approved by: Governing Body

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Last review date: New Policy

Contact: [Headteacher](#)

Next review date: November 2023

Approvers signature: Chair of Governors

1. Policy statement

At Mason Moor Primary School we believe that:

- We work in partnership with parents and partners and seek to improve our school by paying close attention to their concerns;
- All complaints should be fully investigated;
- Parents should receive prompt feedback;
- Urgent complaints should receive immediate attention;
- Complaints, wherever possible, should be resolved through open, informal discussion between the parent and the Class Teacher.

2. Complaints Procedure

A Concern or Complaint?

A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Escalation of Concerns/Complaint

Parent expresses dissatisfaction and want to talk to the school	Speaks to Class Teacher	Class Teacher records concerns on the proforma – issue is hopefully resolved.
Parent makes a formal complaint to the school	Escalated to Assistant Headteacher	AHT investigates and responds with a letter to the parent outlining the steps taken to move forward.
Parent is still unhappy with the outcome from the Assitant Headteacher.	Escalates to Deputy Head Teacher	DHT invites the parent in – recorded on the proforma - responds with a letter to the parent outlining the steps taken to move forward.
Parent unhappy with outcome from Deputy Headteacher - escalates to Headteacher	Headteacher meets with the parent and those involved to seek resolution. A written outcome to the parent follows.	
Escalates to Chair of Governing Body	In extreme circumstances, the CoG or a representative will meet with the parent. A hearing will take place with a written outcome.	

Levels of complaint

Informal – with the Class Teacher

- If parents have any concerns about their child's educational progress they should first discuss their concerns with the Class Teacher. This usually enables the problem to be sorted out swiftly and to everyone's satisfaction. Class Teachers will share concerns/complaints, as appropriate, with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or Headteacher.
- If, following discussion with the Class Teacher, the parent is still not satisfied; they may wish to bring their concerns to the attention of the Senior Leadership Team. Full investigation and discussion should enable most complaints to be resolved at this stage.
- Expressions of concern may be verbal but a complaint should be in writing.

Formal – Complaint Escalates to the Assistant Headteacher (sits with the Senior Leadership Team)

- Where complaints cannot be resolved informally, the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint and the complainant may then refer it to the Assistant Headteacher.
- The formal complaint should be made in writing and a suggested format for the complaint is provided in Appendix 1.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of this complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- The Senior Leader will fully investigate the complaint and respond, in writing, within **10 school days**.

Final stage of a complaint –Chair of Governors

- Where complaints cannot be resolved by the Headteacher the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint to the Governing Body.
- If any complaint is received by individual Governors, including the Chair, before the above stages have been completed, those Governors should refer the parent to the Teacher, Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher.
- A formal complaint to the governors will need to be in writing to the Clerk or Chair of the Governing Body. A suggested format for making a formal complaint is provided in Appendix 1. Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be that action will need to be taken by the Chair before the panel meets. This may include the resolution of the complaint without proceeding to a governors' panel hearing.
- A panel of Governors will be established to investigate and hear the complaint. The panel will not previously have been involved in any detailed discussion of this complaint.
- Urgent cases will be considered as a priority and the time between receipt of the complaint and the panel hearing should not normally exceed **15 school days**.
- The complainant may wish to make an oral presentation in support of their complaint and may wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative.
- The panel will consider the complaint and the chair of the panel will notify the complainant, in writing, of the panel's decision within **5 school days**.

Timescales

These guidelines have been written to ensure that all complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible by the school. The length of the period of time to respond to and resolve complaints will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. The intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is considered reasonable by all parties and where appropriate indicative timescales have been identified.

3. Nature of complaint

Complaints vary in severity and scope. This is why, in the first instance the team at Mason Moor Primary School attempt to resolve the matter informally.

Complaints about the education provided for pupils will be considered as complaints about the Governing Body's responsibilities in respect of the school curriculum, but will not cover complaints about the actions of individual Teachers or the Headteacher.

If, in the course of consideration of a complaint, the Headteacher and/or Governing Body conclude that disciplinary or other proceedings should be initiated, they should take separate action as appropriate.

Complaints to Ofsted are rare but should be a last resort having exhausted the scope of the complaints policy. Typically, Ofsted will ask the complainant if you have escalated the complaint through the school and to the Governing Body. They will ask for outcome information and will often check this with the school and their records.

4. Policy Monitoring & Review

Recording complaints

- The Headteacher will monitor all written complaints and keep a copy of all relevant correspondence.
- If there are a number of complaints about the same issue, or a rise in the number of complaints overall, the Headteacher will ensure a full investigation is undertaken.

Governing Body review

- The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of all written complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The process of listening to, and resolving complaints should contribute to school improvement.
- Wherever practicable, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

Appendix 1 – Formal complaint form

If making a complaint in writing the following form identifies the key information required.

Name:	
Pupils name:	
Relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	
Day time telephone:	
Evening telephone:	
Please give details of your complaint.	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (i.e. 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 note of receipt sent:	
Sent by:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

The Complaints Panel

- The Governing Body will nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear a formal complaint.
- The panel will consist of an uneven number of governors, usually 3.
- No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.
- In deciding the make-up of the panel, every effort will be made to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The complaints panel will select their own Chair.

The Remit of the Complaints Panel

- It is important that the panel hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- The panel can:
 - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to mitigate against problems of a similar nature reoccurring.

The Role of the Clerk

- The complaints panel will normally be clerked by the Clerk to the Governors unless that person is either unavailable or part of the complaint. In such cases alternative clerking arrangements will be made.
- The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and will be required to:
 - **Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;**
 - **Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;**
 - **Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;**
 - **Record the proceedings;**
 - **Notify all parties of the panel's decision.**

** Taken from the Complaints Procedure Toolkit (Department for Education, 2011)*

The Role of the Chair of the Complaints Panel

The Chair of the panel will ensure that:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- The panel seeks to assist parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing to feel at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;

- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- Written material is seen by all parties and if any new and relevant issue arises give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it;
- Notify the complainant of the panel's decision, in writing. The letter will also explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a Complaints Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing should be as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their 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 Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- 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 response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.