CRUDGINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy date – June 2018

Review schedule – this policy will be reviewed each year

Date of review – June 2019

Contents

1. What is a complaint? 2
2. Who should I talk to? 2
   2.1. Step One – A first Informal Meeting 2
   2.2. Step Two - A Second Informal Meeting 2
3. Step Three - Formal Complaint Letter to the Headteacher 3
   3.1. How Are Formal Complaints Dealt With by the Headteacher? 3
4. Step Four - Formal Complaint to the Governing Body 4
   4.1. How Are Formal Complaints Dealt With by the Governing Body? 4
5. Step Five – Taking the Matter Further 6
6. What to do if the complaint is about the Headteacher 6
7. Monitoring of Complaints 6
8. Complaints Flow chart. 7

CRUDGINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF POLICY ABOUT HOW COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS AND OTHERS WILL BE DEALT WITH

Note: This policy statement relates to complaints other than those about the curriculum or religious worship for which a separate procedure has been established. Details of this procedure are available from school.

1. What is a complaint?

The school considers a complaint principally to be an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction received from or on behalf of a parent or member of the public regarding: -

- action taken by or on behalf of the school.
- failure by the school or its staff or contractors to respond to a reported problem.
- the standard of service(s) provided or discrimination in their delivery.
- the policies of the school.

2. Who should I talk to?

2.1. Step One – A first Informal Meeting

- Most concerns can be dealt with quickly and effectively through informal discussion with members of staff at school. You are always welcome to come into school to discuss any concerns or problems that have arisen, and are encouraged to talk to your child's teacher in the first instance, as the teacher, having knowledge of both your child and events in school, is often the person best placed to help. You may not be able to travel to school so you may prefer to phone the school or ask for someone to phone you back. Your child's class teacher may – depending on the situation/nature of concern – recommend an escalation to step 2.2

2.2. Step Two - A Second Informal Meeting

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the class teacher, you should ask for an appointment to speak with the Headteacher.
  The purpose of this meeting will be to establish the nature of the ongoing concern, what has been discussed with the class teacher so far and any actions arising from the initial meeting. It is in everyone's interest, particularly the child or children, for concerns to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.

However, it may be that the Headteacher will need to look into what has happened since the initial meeting before they can suggest how the complainant's concern might be resolved. If this is the case, it should be agreed how and within what timescale they will contact the complainant to let them know the outcome of their enquiries and what actions they have taken/propose to take.

The Headteacher will make a brief written record of the concern discussed and what has been agreed and to write to the complainant summarising this.

It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved at this stage through the informal process.

3. **Step Three - Formal Complaint to the Headteacher**

- If the complainant feels that the issue/issues raised has/have not been resolved through the informal process and they wish to pursue it further the complainant may raise it in person, by telephone or in writing with the Headteacher. The complainant should clearly indicate the concern which has previously been discussed and why the complainant feels that the issue is unresolved. It is also helpful if the complainant considers what resolution they are seeking. <u>You will be informed of the Headteachers' investigation within 20 school days.</u>

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing;

3.1. How Are Formal Complaints Dealt With by the Headteacher?

Complaints that cannot be resolved informally will be dealt with as follows:

- An acknowledgement (or final response where possible) will be sent to the complainant within five working days (i.e. school term days).

- The complainant will be told the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the complaint.

- A full response will be sent within twenty working days (i.e. school term days) or if a complete answer still cannot be given the complainant will be told what is being done to investigate the complaint and how long this will take.

- The complainant will be told if their complaint has to be dealt with under a separate procedure.

4. Step Four - Formal Complaint to the Governing Body

- Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision the Headteacher has made about their complaint, the complainant should then contact the Chair of Governors.

- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing;

  Chair of Governors
  c/o Crudgington Primary School
  School Lane
  Crudgington
  Telford
  TF6 6JF

  The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be looked into by the governing body's Complaints Committee. However, at this stage, there is provision within the policy to attempt to resolve the complaint informally. In the first instance the Chair may choose to exercise this option before formal referral to the Complaints Committee itself.

4.1. How Are Formal Complaints Dealt With by the Governing Body?

Complaints will fall into two categories:

- those where the complainant has taken the matters of concern up with school staff, culminating with the head teacher but remains dissatisfied with the response received;

- those about the head teacher that the complainant does not wish to take up with the head teacher directly.

  The Chair of Governors receiving a complaint, which in the first instance should, but has not been dealt with by staff including the Head teacher, can refer the complainant to the head teacher to exhaust this process before involving the governing body Complaints Committee.

  However if the complaint is about a member of staff and makes allegations that, if confirmed, could lead to disciplinary action the chair of the governing body should firstly contact the Local Authority Human Resources Service to discuss the most appropriate way of dealing with the complaint. If it is decided that staff disciplinary processes should be

used then the school's appropriate personnel procedures will be followed. If it is decided that the matter be dealt with as a general complaint then the procedures set out below will be followed.

- Chair of the governing body refers the complaint to the governing body's Complaints Committee.

- The Complaints Committee initially consider the complaint and then asks the head teacher to submit written comments on the points of concern raised. It is important that submissions include any witness statements or other information gathered as part of the detailed investigation. If the committee feel there are any gaps, or lack of clarity, in the information supplied the complainant / head teacher will be asked to provide further written information as required.

  This is important as the Complaints Committee need to understand clearly the concerns expressed, ensure that the complainant is given fair treatment and be given the opportunity to fully state their case.

  If the complainant's case is considered from the written account then the head teacher's comments on the points raised should also be in writing only. <u>It is imperative that both parties are treated equally at all times</u>. In some circumstances the complainant may be seen as being disadvantaged if only written accounts are submitted, and therefore both parties should be offered a 'hearing' with the complaints committee. The Secretary of State's guidance model procedure includes a 'hearing' by the governing body complaints committee. But this is not compulsory. If a hearing is requested it is advised that the complainant and the head teacher are heard separately otherwise there is a risk that the meeting may well degenerate and thereby achieve little.

- It is also useful if complainants can be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. This might enable the governing body to come to a speedier, mutually acceptable, resolution.

- The Complaints Committee should then write a response answering all the points of concern, setting out the evidence considered, the conclusions/decisions reached and reasons for them.

- Complaints Committee meetings should be held without too much delay. The school complaints policy (if the LA's guidance has been followed), requires a full response to be sent within 20 school days wherever possible or, an explanation given as to why this cannot be achieved.

- In the interests of impartiality, complainants have the right to request an independent panel, if they believe there is likely to be bias in the

proceedings. The school will consider such requests but ultimately, the decision to appoint an independent panel rests with the governors.

5. Step Five – Taking the Matter Further

Complainants still not satisfied with the outcome who want to take the matter further, beyond the school, can write to -

The Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London SW1P 3BT

However, the LA's policy is that unless allegations relate to serious incidents of staff conduct, child protection issues or potential criminal activity it will not look into complaints about matters in schools until after the school's own complaints procedures have been fully exhausted and concerns still remain. The LA consider schools should have every opportunity to resolve complaints at local level in the first instance. The LA recognise that the majority of issues raised can only be effectively resolved at local level where, in most cases the power to take appropriate action is vested in the school rather than the LA.

6. What to do if the complaint is about the Headteacher

Complaints about the Headteacher, that the complainant cannot or does not wish to raise directly with the Headteacher, should in the first instance be sent to the chair of governors who will arrange for the matter to be dealt with as set out in step 4 above.

7. Monitoring of Complaints

An anonymised analysis of all formal complaints will be reported to the governing body regularly so that any necessary changes in the school's policies, practices or procedures can be considered and implemented.

8. Complaints Flow chart.

Time frame	Action / Process	Notes
	concern/complaint is raised	**Informal stage**
1 – 5 days	Informal meeting with Class Teacher Informal meeting with Head Teacher	
	Complainant not satisfied with outcome of informal meetings.	**Start of Formal stage**
	Headteacher receives formal complaint	
	Complainant not satisfied with decision made by the Headteacher regarding the formal complaint	
	Formal complaint to Chair of Governors	
	Chair notifies Chair of complaints committee who confirms the date of the meeting with other governors.	**Formal Stage**
	Complainant and Head teacher invited to attend the meeting – the notification should inform the complainant of his/her rights to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend / representative. It should also be explained how the meeting will be conducted and of the complainants right to submit further written evidence to the committee.	
	Head teacher invited to prepare a written report in response to the complaint	
	All relevant correspondence circulated to the complaints committee; the complainant and the Head teacher in advance of the meeting.	
	If the Complainant or the Head teacher wish to call witnesses the agreement of the committee chair should be obtained in advance.	
	The complaints meeting. The following procedures to be noted: • The complainant and Head teacher to present their view. • The committee to question the complainant and the Head teacher regarding the issues raised.	
	The committee Chair should explain to the complainant and the Head teacher that the committee will consider its decision.	
No more than 20 days following the complaints committee meeting	The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision. The decision will be finding to uphold or not uphold the complaint, or uphold some parts and not others.	
	The committee decides on the action to be taken. A written statement outlining the decision with reasons to both the complainant and the Head teacher	
	The complainant should be advised that if he / she is dissatisfied with the outcome he/she has the right to take the matter further by writing to the Secretary of State.	