

LANGTOFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is in everyone's interest that concerns are allayed and that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Langtoft Primary School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concern or complaint. It gives careful consideration to all concerns and complaints and deals with them as swiftly as possible. The school aims to resolve any complaint through constructive dialogue, putting the well-being of its pupils above all other issues. Sufficient opportunity is provided for any complaint to be fully discussed and plan for a resolution to be found.
- 1.2 Langtoft Primary School is clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage should reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The formal procedures may need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. Formal complaints should always follow the complaints procedure outlined in this policy.
- 1.3 This policy sought advice from the Department for Education through its document, [Best Practice Advice for Schools Complaints Procedures 2016](#) , published in January 2016. The advice is non-statutory, and has been produced to help schools understand their obligations and duties in relation to Section 29 Part 1 of the Education Act 2002.
- 1.4 The school has a procedure in place should a complaint be made by a parent/carer of a pupil on roll, a member of the community, or a parent/carer of an ex-pupil. This policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases. If the school cannot resolve any complaint itself, those concerned can ask the Local Authority to intervene.
- 1.5 The school complaints procedure does not cover complaints for which there are established statutory or other prescribed appeal procedures in place, for example: admissions appeals; exclusions appeals; SEND provision; Child Protection procedures; serious complaints against staff; or public examinations.

2 The complaints procedure

- 2.1 A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing.
- 2.2 At Langtoft Primary School there are four clearly defined stages to the complaints process. They are outlined below and described in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6. An unsatisfied complainant can take a complaint to the next stage.
1. **Stage 1** (informal): concern heard by the class teacher or with the particular teacher concerned
 2. **Stage 2** (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher
 3. **Stage 3** (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors

4. **Stage 4** (formal): complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.
- 2.3 **Stage 1.** If a person (typically a parent/carer - and referred to as such for the rest of this policy - but see also section 1.4) is concerned about the education that the school is providing they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. A class teacher should make him/herself available to a parent/carer within one school day. Notes should be kept by the class teacher of the concern as perceived by the parent/carer, the agreed actions – with time scale - to be taken to resolve the issue, an outline of the outcomes of the actions and how the issue is going to be monitored. The class teacher must share the notes with the Headteacher.
- 2.4 **Stage 2.** Where a parent/carer feels that a situation has not been resolved through discussion with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, or the class teacher is the subject of the concern, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. The Headteacher should make him/herself available to the parent/carer within two school days. The Headteacher considers any such concern seriously and investigates each case – see paragraph **1.4 Investigating a concern/complaint.** In almost all cases, concerns are typically resolved at this stage. When it is felt that a concern is not resolved, a formal complaint may be raised using the **Complaints Form** in **Appendix A.**
- 2.5 **Stage 3.** Should a parent/carer have a concern about the Headteacher or is unsatisfied with the outcome of a concern heard by the Headteacher at Stage 2, s/he should contact the Chair of Governors at; ChairofGovernors@langtoft.lincs.sch.uk, attaching a completed **Complaints Form** in **Appendix A.** Alternatively, the Complaints Form can be posted to the school in an envelope addressed to the Chair of Governors, care of the school's address.
- 2.6 If a parent/carer is unhappy with the outcome following an investigation by the Chair of Governors, s/he can make a complaint using the **Complaints Form** in **Appendix A** to the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel (**Stage 4**). This is addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Body, care of the school's address. The Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Appeal Panel.
- 2.7 Where the complaint is against the Chair of Governors or an individual governor, a complainant should submit a completed **Complaints Form** in **Appendix A** in an envelope addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, care of the school's address. The Chair of Governors would normally consider complaints against an individual governor and the Vice Chair would normally consider complaints against the Chair of Governors.
- 2.8 If a parent/carer is unable to complete a Complaints Form, they should contact the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school, who will record the complaint as a statement for the parent/carer to sign.
- 2.9 A parent/carer should receive an acknowledgement from the Headteacher/Chair of Governors/Clerk to the Governing Body within five school days. The acknowledgement letter should also indicate the date by which the parent/carer can expect to receive a written response to a formal complaint. This will normally be within ten school days from the date of the acknowledgement letter. If, at any stage of the process, it is not possible to work to the timescales given (due, for example, to the volume of written representations that need to be collected), then the Clerk will inform the parent of the reason for the delay and will issue a new timescale.

- 2.10 **Stage 4.** The Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel must consider all complaints within ten school days of receipt. It arranges a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invites the person/s making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her/his complaint in more detail. The panel gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.
- 2.11 After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent/carer about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent/carer's satisfaction and by putting the well being of the child above all other issues. The decision of the Complaints Appeal Panel is normally final.
- 2.12 If the complaint is not resolved, a parent/carer may make representation to the Local Authority. Further information about this process is available from the Local Authority and School Community Liaison Officer on 01522 554884.

3. Investigating complaints

- 3.1 At each stage, the person investigating the concern or complaint makes sure that they:
- **establish what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
 - **clarify** the nature of the concern or complaint and what remains unresolved;
 - meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
 - **clarify** what the **complainant feels** would put things right;
 - interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
 - conduct the interview with an **open mind** and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - **keep notes** of the interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

4. Time limits

- 4.1 A parent/carer should make the school aware of their complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred. Usually, it is expected that this would be done within three months of the incident occurring. If a parent/carer does not contact the school within that time, their complaint will not usually be considered..
- 4.2 If a complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.
- 4.3 If a parent/carer feels there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented them from meeting the time limit, they can provide an explanation of the circumstances along with their complaint so that Governors can take them into account.
- 4.4 The final decision rests with Governors as to whether the complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three month time limit.

5. Unreasonable complainant behaviour

- 5.1 Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with agreed procedures. Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school. Examples of behaviours that are considered to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Using abusive or threatening language and/or behaviour.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources in pursuit of a complaint, whether in person, by phone, email or letter.
- Harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy.
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint.
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand.
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.

5.2 The school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff and governors operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond / address any issues.

5.3 Where a complainant raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. The actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

- An informal approach to inform the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified.
- A formal written communication advising the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken if the behaviour is not modified.
- Setting limitations on the method and frequency of contact with staff / school personnel.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing and deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause.
- Setting limitations on the person's access to the school site.

5.4 It should be noted that parents/carers and members of the wider community do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be banned from entering the school site with immediate effect after an incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

5.5 Any restrictions placed on a person as a result of this policy will be time limited, with a specified date as to when the restrictions will be reviewed and potentially lifted.

5.6 The Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to ensuring a full and fair consideration of all legitimate complaints and recognise that the majority of parents/carers and members of the wider community will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy.

6. **Monitoring and review**

6.1 The governors as represented by the *People, Finance and Premises Committee* (excluding the Chair of Governors if they are a member) monitor the complaints procedure by reviewing all Stage 2 complaints as an Agends item at all of their

meetings in order to ensure that all complaints are handled according to policy. When individual complaints are heard, the school identifies underlying issues (if any) that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

- 6.2 This policy is made available to all parents/carers on the school's website and as a paper copy on request, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints procedure. At least once an academic year, the school's newsletter reminds parents/carers of the value of sharing their concerns with a class teacher or the Headteacher from the outset.
- 6.3 This policy will be reviewed in March 2019 or sooner and with regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State. The *People, Finance and Premises Committee* will be responsible for reviewing the policy which, in turn, must be ratified by the full governing body.

APPENDIX A

LANGTOFT PRIMARY SCHOOL Complaint Form

Please complete and return to this form to the Headteacher (Mr McCullough) via the school office or via email to enquiries@langtoft.lincs.sch.uk.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, return the completed form to the Chair of Governors (Mr Seaton) via the school office or via email to ChairofGovernors@langtoft.lincs.sch.uk

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors or an individual governor, please return the completed form to The Clerk of Governors via the school office.

Receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged and an explanation will be given as to what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Your address:

Your postcode:

Your daytime telephone number:

Your evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(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.

Your signature:

Today's date:

Official Use:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: