

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



COMPLAINTS POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2016

**Personnel Responsible for the
Policy**

The Governors

Date of Review

September 2017

PRINCIPLES

Our aim is to operate an effective complaints procedure, laid down by Westminster City Council and the Diocese

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Be easily accessible and publicized
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Seek and take account of the complainant's suggestions for ways of addressing the issue
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Address all the points at issue with a response and appropriate redress where necessary
- Identify areas of agreement between the parties and clarify any areas of misunderstanding
- Provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

STAGES OF THE PROCEDURES

The following stages are our recommended for a complaints procedure:

Stage 1: Dealing with concerns and complaints informally

Most concerns can be resolved at this stage, whereby the complainant speaks directly to the class teacher, or other person responsible for the issue. (Governors who are approached should refer a complainant to the headteacher in the first instance).

At this stage it may be unclear whether the person is asking a question or expressing a concern rather than making a complaint. This is an opportunity to clarify the matter and identify what sort of outcome the person is looking for. At the end of the discussion the person dealing with the concerns should be sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) has been agreed, and what to do if the concern recurs or is not resolved.

If the complainant still has concerns, we refer to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher

A headteacher may wish to designate another senior member of staff to deal with complaints, but will generally be the contact point (unless the complaint is about the head, in which case the chair of governors is the contact).

At this stage the complainant may convey their concerns in writing. This may not always be possible, or even advisable.

The headteacher (or designate) should:

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and give a target date for providing a response (normally within 20 working days).
- Provide an opportunity to discuss the issue. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied by a friend, and this will be made clear in an invitation to a meeting.
- Try to establish what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for to resolve the situation
- Gather information in relation to the complaint, e.g. by interviewing witnesses, taking statements, etc.
- Come to a conclusion about the issue and how to resolve it. This could be communicated as a written response, or a meeting with the complainant could be arranged. However a record of the outcome will be maintained. The complainant will also be informed of what to do next if still not happy.

Stage 3: Referral to the Chair of Governors (or other designated governors) unless complaint is about Chair of Governors

If a complainant wants to take the complaint further they should contact the chair or other designated governor in writing. The complainant should explain why they are complaining, who they have already spoken to and what they want from a further review of the situation.

At this stage the chair should look into the issue and what has already been done and seek some mutually agreeable resolution of the difficulty.

The chair of governors should:

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and give a target date for providing a response (informally within 20 working days). In acknowledging the complaint the chair may need to explain the powers of the governing body on the matter in questions and the extent to which it may or may not be possible to achieve the outcome desired by the complainant.
- Look into the complaint. The Chair may need to interview the headteacher and possibly other members of staff and may need to meet or contact the complainant.
- Check what has been done so far, and consider whether anything further might be done.
- Communicate her/his conclusions and/or suggestions to the complainant, either in writing or at a meeting.
- Provide the complainant with the option of a review by a panel of the governing body by contacting the clerk to the governors.

Stage 4: Review by a Complaints Panel of the Governing Body

Complaints only rarely reach this formal level. Complaints should not be considered by the full governing body because:

- Governors dealing with an issue need to be seen to be impartial – they should have not previous involvement in an issue.
- It is possible that a complaint could lead to disciplinary action against a staff member, and other governors would be needed to hear the matter in an impartial way.

The Panel must have the authority of the governing body to act, therefore arrangements should be agreed at the beginning of every school year for convening a complaints panel when necessary.

At this stage a complaint needs to be put in writing.

This is the final stage of the procedure. There is no further redress or appeal.

Timescales. The date of the appeal panel meeting should be agreed by all parties within five school days of the receipt of the written referral of the complaint. The meeting itself should be held within fifteen school days of the receipt of the referral. If the complainant or the headteacher wishes to submit information in writing to the panel, they should send it to the clerk of the governors at least five school days before the meeting. As far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of the term, especially at the end of the summer term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary.