



## **Complaint Procedure Policy**

### **Policy statement**

We believe that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our school and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the school. If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly, by an informal approach [with the appropriate member of staff]. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our school to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.

### **Aims:**

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

### **Procedures:**

Watchorn Christian School keeps a written record of any complaints that reach stage two and above, and their outcome. This is to be made available to parents, as well as to Ofsted inspectors on request.

### **Making a complaint**

#### **Stage 1: informal**

- If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, 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. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.
- The complaint will be dealt with within 10 days of the problem occurring.

- Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the head teacher. Whilst at this stage the complaint is considered to be informal, the head teacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.
- If the complaint is not resolved at this stage the parent can move to stage 2 and a written complaint can be made (Appendix 1).
- The complaint is recorded in our Complaints Record file.

## **Stage 2: written complaint**

- If a concern has not been addressed satisfactorily through informal discussion, and the matter needs to be formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, a complaint form will be given (kept in the Complaint Record file). Help in completing the form would be offered by someone unconnected with the complaint.
- The school will acknowledge in writing, that they have received the complaint form within three working days after receiving it. The school will enclose a copy of the school's complaints procedure with the acknowledgement.
- The complaint will be dealt with by the Head teacher and Governing Body unless the complaint is about the Head teacher- in this case the Governing Body will deal with the complaint, they will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint.
- Following the meeting the head teacher or chair of governors will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint.
- Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the Head teacher's and chair of governors' decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you
- The parent should receive the written response to their complaint within 14 days of the school receiving the written complaint.
- Written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation will be kept in the Complaints Record file.

- If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation and the schools findings, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3, as described below.

### **Stage 3- Complaints panel**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the written response that they receive, then s/he may make a further complaint to the Governing Body, who will then organise a Complaints Panel.
- The purpose of this arrangement is to give your complaint a hearing in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice. They will be unbiased and unconnected to the running of the school.
- The complaint panel will include one independent person who has no involvement in the running of the school. This may be a head teacher from another school or a retired solicitor.
- The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent. We recognise, however, that it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken your complaint seriously.
- The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:
  1. The clerk to the governing body will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 14 working days.
  2. The clerk will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint. You can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if you wish.
  3. The Head teacher will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised in your complaint will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
  6. A letter will be sent to explain what will happen at the panel meeting and the clerk will also inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
  7. With the agreement of the chair of the panel, the Head teacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
  8. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at ease.

**9.** As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.

**10.** The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive nature and are, therefore, confidential.

**11.** Normally, the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.

**12.** During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:

- You to explain your complaint, and for you to be questioned by the Head teacher and panel members about the complaint
- You to question the head teacher about the complaint
- You and the head teacher to make a final statement.
- Any party have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses

**13.** In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the head teacher and yourself within two weeks. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.

**14.** The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:

- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

**15.** The clerk will send you and the head teacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within two weeks. The letter will explain what further recourse, beyond the governing body, is available to you.

**16.** We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's Complaints Record file but separate from pupils' personal records.

## ***The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the Local Safeguarding Children Board***

- If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.
- Parents can complain to Ofsted by telephone or in writing at:  
Ofsted National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD  
Tel: 0300 123 1231
- These details are displayed on our school's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, we follow the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- In these cases, both the parent and school are informed and our Head teacher works with Ofsted or the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

### **Records**

- A record of complaints in relation to our school, or the children or the adults working in our school, is kept for at least three years; including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed. This is all kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in our Complaint Record file.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head teacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved and copies of all letters in a complaints file. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

This policy was adopted by Watchorn Christian School.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signed on behalf of the provider\_\_\_\_\_

Name of signatory\_\_\_\_\_

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 1

Parental Complaint Form

Member of staff receiving the complaint: .....

From (name of parent): .....

Name of pupil and class: .....

Date/Time of complaint: .....

Complaint: .....

.....

.....

Action taken: .....

.....

.....

Outcome:

.....

.....

.....

Issue passed to: .....

Date/Time: .....

Seen:

Senior member of staff (Name): .....

Date/Time: .....

Deputy Head:.....

Head: .....

Carol to add table