



# Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School

## Complaints Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School is committed to maintaining positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. We welcome feedback and recognise that concerns and complaints provide valuable opportunities to improve our practice.

This policy outlines the process for raising and resolving concerns or complaints in a fair, transparent and timely way. The policy reflects best practice guidance from the Department for Education for maintained schools.

## 2. Principles

- Complaints will be treated seriously and handled with sensitivity.
- Complaints will be investigated objectively and impartially.
- Complainants will be kept informed of progress.
- Complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Lessons learned will inform school improvement.

## 3. Concern vs Complaint

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt for which reassurance is sought. Most concerns can be resolved informally.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action by the school requiring formal investigation.

## 4. Who Can Make a Complaint

Any person, including parents, carers, members of the public or other stakeholders may make a complaint about services provided by the school.

## 5. Scope of the Policy

This policy covers complaints relating to:

- Education and care provided to pupils
- School policies and procedures
- Operational decisions of the school
- Conduct of staff

The following are not covered by this policy:

- Admissions decisions
- School exclusions

- Statutory SEND assessments
- Staff grievances or disciplinary procedures
- Whistleblowing

## **6. How to Raise a Complaint**

Complaints can be raised in person, by phone, by email or in writing. The school will make reasonable adjustments to support access to the procedure.

## **7. Time Limits**

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the issue arising. The school may consider complaints outside this period where appropriate.

## **8. Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

Concerns should first be discussed with the class teacher or appropriate staff member. Most issues can be resolved quickly at this stage.

A response will normally be provided within 5 working days.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Investigation by the Headteacher**

If the matter remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be submitted to the headteacher.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and investigated. A written response will normally be provided within 15 working days.

### **Stage 3 – Governing Body Complaints Panel**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by the governing body.

- The panel will consist of at least three members.
- Members will have had no prior involvement in the complaint.
- At least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The hearing will normally be convened within 20 working days. Complainants will receive at least 5 working days notice.

## **9. Governor Panel Hearing Procedure**

1. The clerk to governors organises the panel meeting.
2. The complainant and school representatives may submit written evidence.

3. Both parties may attend and present their case.
4. Panel members may ask questions to clarify issues.
5. After hearing evidence, the panel deliberates in private.
6. A written decision with reasons will be sent within 5 working days.

## **10. Safeguarding and Escalation (Reading LA)**

If a complaint relates to safeguarding or allegations about staff, the school will follow safeguarding procedures and refer concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate.

For safeguarding concerns relating to staff, the headteacher or chair of governors will contact Reading Borough Council's safeguarding team or the LADO service.

Serious safeguarding concerns may also be referred to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

## **11. Serial or Unreasonable Complaints**

The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly. However, in a small number of cases complainant behaviour may become unreasonable.

- Persistently pursuing complaints that have already been concluded
- Refusing to accept outcomes after the process is exhausted
- Excessive contact with the school
- Aggressive or abusive behaviour towards staff

In such circumstances the school may restrict methods of communication or contact. Any restrictions will be proportionate and authorised by the headteacher and chair of governors.

## **12. After the School Procedure**

If the complainant believes the school has not followed its procedure correctly, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

## **13. Record Keeping**

The school will keep records of formal complaints and outcomes securely in accordance with data protection legislation.

## Appendix A – Visual Complaints Process Flowchart

