

Coppermill Primary School



# Complaints Policy

Ratified by the Resources Committee on: 4 February 2015

To be reviewed: Every two years

Next review: Spring 2017

## **Introduction**

We believe that our school provides outstanding education for all our children and that all staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there concerns or complaints are raised by parents, carers or other individuals who interact with the school. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

## **Aims, Objectives and Limitations**

The prime aim of Coppermill Primary School's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

The majority of issues raised with the school are concerns rather than complaints. Coppermill Primary School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within 3 months of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than 3 months it will not be investigated.

Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

## **Stages of the Complaints Process**

The Coppermill Primary School Complaints Policy has three main stages as follows: -

- Stage 1 – Concern is raised informally with a staff member.
- Stage 2 – Complaint is heard by Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.
- Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

The processes during each of these stages are described in the following sections.

For complaints raised against the Headteacher, please see the section towards the end of this document which describes the variance from the main process.

## **Stage 1 – Raising a concern**

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern.

The school requests that parents make their first contact with the child's class teacher, or in the case of a school administration issue, the School Business Manager. In the case of a complaint or concern regarding the Headteacher, initial contact should be made with the Chair of Governors.

The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. The situation will be treated with sensitivity, since all teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before the problem becomes more serious.

## **Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher**

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or does not feel comfortable approaching the class teacher, or where their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should contact the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher.

The complaint can be raised with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher either in person, by telephone or in writing using the Complaint Form included in the appendix to this policy.

The school takes such complaints extremely seriously and any complaints that reach this stage will be investigated thoroughly, objectively and impartially.

Written or verbal acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within 2 working days of receiving a complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and will give a target date for providing a response to the complaint which should normally be within 5 working days. If the target cannot be met a letter should be written within 5 working days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will seek to meet or speak with all of the appropriate people in order to establish the facts relating to the complaint. This may include the complainant, staff, pupils and any other person.

They will then produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly. This response should contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this should also include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

### **Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body’s Complaints Appeal Panel**

If a complaint remains unresolved following stages 1 and 2, a formal complaint may be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If an informal complaint is made to a Governor, they will immediately refer the complainant to the Coppermill Primary School Complaints Policy, so that the relevant procedures may be followed. Governors must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

When a formal complaint is received written or verbal acknowledgement will be provided to the complainant within 5 working days and will include details of the expected timescales for this stage of the process. Timescales will vary depending on the complexity of the complaint and the number of people involved but it would be expected that this stage should complete within 8 weeks of the complaint being raised.

A panel of 2 or 3 Governing body members will then be convened to review the complaint. This panel should be impartial and as such will not include any Governors who have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The Governors involved will review all evidence and act in a fair and impartial manner.

If the panel considers it appropriate for the complainant to attend a meeting to hear the complaint then they will determine the date, time, aims and attendees for this meeting. Meetings of this nature will not in all instances be required but any that take place will be clerked and minutes will be circulated for review and approval by all parties within 5 working days.

At this stage the appeal panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

After hearing and reviewing all the evidence, the Governors consider their decision and inform the complainant about it in writing. This written response should contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this should also include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The complaint is considered closed from the school’s perspective at this stage.

### **Unresolved Complaints at Stage 3**

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The Governors appeal hearing is however the last school-based stage of the complaints process. The complainant can contact the local authority who will review the complaint to ensure that all procedures have been correctly followed but will not investigate the complaint itself.

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

### **Complaints against the Headteacher**

If the complaint is about the Headteacher it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors in the first instance.

Initially the Chair will assess the complaint and where appropriate attempt to address the concerns raised through an informal procedure in line with stage 1 of the standard process.

If the Chair decides that the issue cannot be dealt with informally or if an informal process does not resolve the issue to the complainant's satisfaction then the process will progress to Stage 3 and be heard by the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

### **Monitoring**

The Governors monitor the Complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The school logs all complaints received and records how they were resolved.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions, which may affect the complaints process and make any necessary modifications to this policy. In the absence of changes in regulation of identified changes in process, the policy is reviewed and approved every two years as a matter of best practice.

## **Appendix I:**

### **Coppermill Primary School complaint form**

**Please complete and return to a member of the Senior Leadership team who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

**Your name:**

**Pupil's name:**

**Your relationship to the pupil:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Day time telephone number:**

**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.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**