

# Coppermill Primary School



## Complaints Procedure

Ratified by the Resources Committee on: March 2019

Review cycle: Every two years

Next review: Summer 2021

## 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. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and other individuals who interact with the school. We accept that not all of this will be positive. The following policy sets out the procedure that Coppermill Primary school follows in such cases.

## Aims, Objectives and Limitations

The prime aim of Coppermill Primary School's policy is to resolve concerns and complaints as fairly, openly 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.

## Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered however the headteacher will determine whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

## Scope of this Complaint Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

This procedure does not cover the following issues:

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions to schools</li><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li><li>• School re-organisation proposals</li><li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li></ul>	Concerns should be raised direct with Waltham Forest Council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exclusion of children from school</li></ul>	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-">www.gov.uk/school-</a>

	<a href="#">discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for school staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a> or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures</li> </ul>	<p>These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>

Complaints which have already been investigated will not be considered again. Legal, safeguarding or disciplinary proceedings may take precedence over complaints procedures (e.g. where there is a police investigation).

### 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 Assistant Headteacher
- Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Governing Board's Complaints Appeal Panel.

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

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

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.

## **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 financial/administration issue, the School Business Manager. In the case of a complaint or concern regarding the Headteacher, initial contact should be made with the Headteacher to try and resolve the concern.

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 Assistant 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 Assistant Headteacher.

The complaint can be raised with the Headteacher or Assistant 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 3 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 will be written within 5 working days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

The Headteacher or Assistant 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 will 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 it will 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 Board’s Complaints Appeal Panel**

If a complaint has been through stages 1 and 2 and the complainant is not happy with the outcome, the complaint must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Chair of Governors will then instruct the Clerk to set up a complaints review panel to consider it. 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 board 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, where appropriate, 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 and there is no right to further appeal.

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

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.

### **Complaints against the Headteacher or Governors**

Where a complaint regards the Headteacher, the complainant should first directly approach the Headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the Chair of Governors.

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 Board Complaints Panel.

Where a complaint regards a governor, the same process applies as for the Headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the individual should contact the clerk to the governors through governor services at the local authority. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 3 will take immediate effect. The Vice- Chair will mediate any proceedings.

### **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:**