



Finchampstead C of E (Aided) Primary School

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it

Complaints Policy

Approved by:	Board of Governors
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Last reviewed:	April 2024
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Next review due by:	April 2025
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This policy relates to all matters concerning the actions of staff and applications of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned, except matters relating to exclusion, curriculum and admissions, which are subject to separate procedures as described below.

General Principles:

- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible.
- Investigation of any complaint or review request will begin within five school days of receipt of the same, save in exceptional circumstances. The investigation will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Part A – Complaining about the actions of a member of staff other than the Headteacher

Informal Stage

The complainant is normally expected to arrange to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by email, telephone or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification, or the provision of information, and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. An unreasonable refusal to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated at this stage.

Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for its investigation. The complainant should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. In addition, the Headteacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the complaint.

The Headteacher will collect such evidence as is deemed necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff who is the subject of the complaint, that member of staff may be accompanied by a friend or representative if they wish.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant and the member of staff concerned will be informed in writing of the outcome. This will normally be within ten school days of having started the investigation, but if it is expected to take longer then the complainant will be notified. The outcome may be to the effect that:

- there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld;
- the concern is not substantiated by the evidence;
- the concern was substantiated in part or full (some detail may be given of action the school will now take to review procedures, etc);
- the matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

The complainant will then be told that consideration of their complaint by the Headteacher is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request that the Governing Board review the process followed by the Head in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Headteacher, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described in Part C will then be followed.

If the complainant considers that the decision of the Headteacher is perverse, or that the Headteacher has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then the complainant may bring a complaint against the Headteacher under Part B of this procedure. This will provide an opportunity for the evidence to support such a complaint to be investigated.

Part B – Complaining about the actions of the Headteacher

Informal Stage

The complainant is usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Headteacher, but in the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to raise them directly with the Chair of the Governing Board. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information, and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. If both parties agree and the matter is not resolved, then a third party may be invited to act as a mediator for a further meeting. An unreasonable refusal to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated at this stage.

Formal stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of the Governing Board who will determine which of the agreed procedures to invoke. If it is determined that the complaint is 'general', the chair will arrange for its investigation. The complainant should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. In addition, the complainant may be invited to meet with the Chair to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint.

The Chair will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may include the interviewing of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information. The Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair. Once there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher to consider this, he/she will be invited to meet separately with the Chair, in order to present written and oral evidence in response. The Headteacher may be accompanied at this meeting by a friend or representative.

When the investigation has been concluded, the complainant and the Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. This will normally be within ten school days of having started the investigation, but if it is expected to take longer then the complainant and the head teacher will be notified. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Chair is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or considers that the decision of the Chair is perverse, or that the Chair has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then the complainant may request that the Governing Board review the handling of the complaint by the Chair. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of

receiving notice of the outcome from the Chair, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures.

Part C – Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the Headteacher or the Chair shall be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Board, who are delegated to the complaints committee. If any of these governors has been involved in any way in the complaint procedure, or is not completely unbiased (through personal contact with the complainant, for instance) then another governor will be asked to step in.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations may be considered.

The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant. The panel will then invite the Headteacher or Chair, as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint. The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The complainant and the Headteacher or Chair, as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This will normally be within twenty school days of having started the review, but if it is expected to take longer then the complainant and the Headteacher or Chair will be notified. The outcome may be to the effect that:

- there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld;
- the concern is not substantiated by the evidence;
- the concern was substantiated in part or full, but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly, so the matter is now closed;
- the concern was substantiated in part or full and the Governing Board will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation (where practicable).

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint then they may make representations to the Secretary of State or to Ofsted.

The Secretary of State has the power to consider complaints that the governing board has acted unreasonably in the discharge of any of its statutory duties.

The Chief Inspector (Ofsted) has the power to investigate complaints about the school as a whole including standards of education, welfare of pupils and school management. Ofsted will not normally investigate cases to do with individual pupils.

Parents may seek advice from the Department for Education at “www.dfe.gov.uk” or from the Advisory Centre for Education at “www.ace-ed.org.uk” or on their helpline which is available on Monday - Wednesday 10am -1pm on 0300 0115 142.

Complaints about the school curriculum

There is a specific procedure for complaints about the school curriculum and matters relating to it, including the provision of information and charges. In general, these are dealt with in a similar way to other complaints. However, there are some specific differences:

- You may complain either to the LA or the Governing Board in the first instance;
- The complaint will be investigated by whichever of these is responsible for the matter complained about;

- The Governing board will inform both the complainant and the LA of the outcome of its investigation;
- There is a right of appeal to the LA and then to the Secretary of State;
- For Aided Schools, there is a right of appeal to the Diocese on matters of RE and Collective Worship;

In general, internal school matters are the responsibility of the school governing Board. However, you may have a complaint which relates to something which is the Local Authority's responsibility. Arrangements for complaining to the Council are summarised in a separate LAflet (see below).

The LA will provide advice to parents and schools on best practice procedures for dealing with complaints. The LA will, where appropriate, check to make sure that the complaint has been reasonably dealt with. Where required, LA officers may play a role in helping schools to investigate and resolve particular complaints.

Complaints about school admissions and exclusions

Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Complaints relating to special needs

There is a separate appeal procedure for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Complaints against school staff

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

Complaints about the Local Education Authority

Procedures for complaining about the Local Education Authority are set out in a separate LAflet about the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of this LAflet is available from the school, libraries and Council offices.