

# THE EDWARD RICHARDSON PRIMARY SCHOOL TETFORD

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Review, Responsibility & General Information

Policy Category	Management & Staff
Review Cycle	Biennial
Body determining Review Cycle	Governing Body
Date of Governors meeting when last agreed	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
Date of last review	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2016
Term next due for update	Autumn Term 2018
Date due for next agreement by Governors	Spring Term 2019
Member of staff responsible for this update	Andrew Hyde
Member of staff to whom queries are directed	Andrew Hyde
Governor responsible for this update	Chairman
Policy on website	Yes
Requirement	Statutory

### PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS

#### 1. Introduction

In this school all of the staff are dedicated to giving the children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and believe that the school and parents / carers should work in partnership, each carrying out their particular responsibilities to help the pupils gain the most from their time at school.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it, we are doing something you are unhappy with, or not doing something you feel we should, PLEASE TELL US ABOUT IT.

In the first instance, please discuss your concern with your child's class teacher, or the particular teacher immediately responsible for the welfare of your child.

If, after doing this, you do not feel that your concern has been properly addressed, or if you feel it would be difficult to speak to a particular teacher, please discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

If, after doing this and allowing sufficient time for your concern to be considered, you are still not satisfied you can address a formal complaint to the Governors of the School. They will investigate the way in which your original complaint was handled.

## **2. The First Step**

As a first step, if you are unhappy with anything about the school, please talk to the teacher most involved.

Usually, teachers are available for a short while after classes have finished and the children have been dismissed, but to make sure that the teacher has time to listen properly to what you have to say, it is worth telephoning the school to make an appointment at a mutually convenient time. We aim to ensure that most concerns can be resolved in this way.

The teacher will not only try to address your concern but will report the matter to the Head or Senior Teacher so that they are aware of your concern and what is being done about it.

## **3. The Next Step**

Very occasionally it may be that your concern cannot be resolved by the teacher or you may feel that the situation has not been addressed suitably. If this is the case you should raise the issue with the Headteacher yourself. Please bear in mind that, due to the right of all parents to confidentiality, some matters may be addressed without the action taken being immediately obvious. Any matter relating to another child will be dealt with but the action will be confidential between the school and the parents / carers of the child concerned.

Once again it would be helpful to telephone the school and make an appointment so that the Headteacher can set aside the time to talk through the situation carefully with you.

Almost invariably matters can be fully addressed and resolved in this way.

## **4. Taking Matters Further**

We would expect most, if not all, complaints to have been resolved through the stages described earlier in this policy. In exceptional circumstances, however, you may feel that this has not been the case and you may wish to pursue the matter further and more formally.

The LCC model complaints procedure provides the Complaints Committee of a Maintained school with two methods to consider a complaint: 1) written representations or 2) a hearing. This process will be followed in the event that the stages as described above, remain unresolved. Appendix 1 describes the 1) written representations of this stage.

The complaint should have passed through various stages, as outlined above, before arriving at a Complaints Committee, the chief role of the Committee is

to act as a final appeal body for unresolved complaints and to review the school's handling to date.

The written representations process requires each side to carefully consider their case and to support their statements with evidence. Each side is able to see the other's representations / supporting evidence, and the Complaints Committee has all the papers set out before them on which to base their decisions.

The Clerk to Governors acts as the conduit for all correspondence in relation to the complaint. It is extremely important that this rule is followed as otherwise there may be several channels of communication open at once and it will be impossible to manage the process effectively.

The Clerk gathers the representations using the process described in Appendix 1 in 'B02 - Complaints about Maintained Schools' in the School Administration Handbook, and observing all specified deadlines. It is essential that covering letters are used to explain each step of the process to the complainant. Model cover letters are provided in Appendix 5 of B02.

Once the Clerk has all the submissions, copies of the papers will be annotated with reference numbers for ease of use, then circulated to the committee (via secure means); ideally at least five days in advance of their meeting. The Committee members should read their papers and make notes; coming to the meeting well-prepared to discuss the case.

At the meeting, the Committee consider the evidence presented and determine whether to uphold or dismiss each element of the complaint. The burden falls to the complainant to evidence their allegations, rather than to the school to disprove them, and the committee make their decision based on the 'balance of probabilities'.

The Chair of the Committee should write to the complainant setting out the Committee's decision and rationale in respect of each element of the complaint and note any reparation or actions recommended in light of their findings. Finally, the letter should refer the complainant to the DfE School Complaints Unit if they remain dissatisfied.

The Headteacher should receive a copy of the final decision letter. All papers relating to the complaint should be stored in a secure and confidential complaints file and not in the child's file. Any recommended actions should be followed through.

Effective complaints handling can't fix all issues but can demonstrate a fair and proper consideration of the matter.

## **5. Handling Complaints**

The LCC model complaints procedure provides the Complaints Committee of a Maintained school with two methods to consider a complaint: 1) written representations or 2) a hearing. This edition, we look at the process of written

representations. Next edition, we will look at hearings. Academies **must** offer a hearing.

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## **6. Abuse against staff**

Staff have a right to expect their place of work to be a safe environment and any complaint must be made in a manner of mutual respect. Violence, threatening behaviour, vendetta or abuse (including swearing) against any stakeholder, including staff members, does not have a place in any school. Any visitor displaying such behaviours will be subject to sanctions to ensure that the safety of other stakeholders is not compromised.

Appendix

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