



Policy Document	
Subject	Complaints Policy
Approval Date March 2017	Review Date March 2018
Signed by: Name: S England Role: Headteacher	Written by: S England

How we will deal with your concerns

BACKGROUND

Ashwell school takes all complaints made against it, its staff and Governors seriously and undertakes to investigate them in a fair and equitable manner and in accordance with this policy document. Where the complaint is found to be upheld the school will take all reasonable actions to put things right and to avoid recurrence. The school's Governing Body will, as part of its overall monitoring role, evaluate the level and nature of complaints made and upheld.

We recognise that different types of complaint have to be dealt with in different ways and that while some may be of a serious nature others are minor matters which are easily rectified quickly and informally. To this end the school will always try to resolve complaints at the lowest of the following three stages:

1. Informal stage – usually by school staff or headteacher
2. Formal stage – by the Governor Hearing Panel,
3. SEN, National Curriculum and Collective Worship Only by the local authority

The policy also recognises that complaints originate from three main sources: pupils' parents, school staff and people from outside the school's community. Equally complaints can be about the actions of an individual, the policies and procedures of the school or about the fabric of the building or equipment.

There are also areas where complaints received relate to incidents or people outside the jurisdiction of the school. In such cases the school will not be able to hold any complaint hearing but will advise where reasonable as to where any complaint should be addressed. In particular the school will not deal with disputes that occur between parents unless these relate directly to issues within the control of the school.

It should be noted that the safety of school staff is paramount and that any staff encountering a verbally or physically aggressive person shall withdraw from any discussion if they are concerned for their safety until such time that the meeting can continue. If necessary staff can request that the meeting does not continue until a senior member of staff is present.

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us.

Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.

- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

The Governing Body will only sanction meetings between disputing parents at the school in exceptional circumstances where it is considered to be beneficial. These meetings will be chaired by the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors in the presence of the headteacher.

COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS

If a parent has **any** complaint following procedure must be followed. This does not include minor matters which can be resolved informally.

Stage 1 – Formally with Member of Staff or Headteacher

1. The parent shall seek to arrange to speak to the appropriate member of staff at the earliest opportunity and outline the nature of the complaint and indicate what actions they are seeking.
2. Any member of staff approached by a parent with a stage 1 complaint, shall arrange to meet them at a mutually convenient point. Parents should not expect to speak to staff at length once the school day has started, unless in an emergency. Staff shall take account of the nature of the complaint and shall take appropriate action.
3. At the arranged meeting the parent shall explain the nature of the complaint.
4. The member of staff will listen to the complaint and will take an appropriate course of action to:
 - find out relevant information to reach a conclusion,
 - rectify the situation,
5. If the parent is not satisfied, the member of staff shall arrange for the parent to meet with an appropriate member of the leadership team (usually the Headteacher or deputy head teacher) to informally review the complaint.

Stage 2 – Formally with Governing Body

If parents remain unhappy with the outcome of a stage 1 complaint they can submit another complaint to the Chair of governors (see appendix) within two weeks of the outcome of stage 1 (inside school term time) and request for a Stage 2 hearing:

1. Headteacher shall arrange for the Governor Complaint Panel to convene within 28 school days to hear the complaint. The parent will be advised when the panel will be meeting and can either attend in person or submit a letter detailing the complaint.
2. The complaint panel of three unconnected, non-staff Governors shall be convened within the prescribed period and shall seek evidence from all parties and witnesses relating to the complaint. However when considering their decision, this part of the proceedings will be held in private.
3. The complaint panel will advise the headteacher and the complainant of their decision and this will be in writing within 5 working days of the meeting. The complaint panel will also advise the complainant of how they can pursue the complaint if dissatisfied.

4. If the school or staff are unhappy with the decision they can also ask for the complaint to be heard at the third and final stage in some cases (see pg16 of guidance Dealing with school based complaints). In other case there is no formal stage 3.

Stage 3

FOR ALMOST ALL COMPLAINTS, THE PROCEDURE ENDS WITH THE GOVERNING BODY AND THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

If the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted and you remain dissatisfied, you can approach the Secretary of State (or the Education Funding Agency if the school is an Academy, Free School, Studio School or University Technical College). Further advice is available from the Children's Legal Centre, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) or Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus).

However, if your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health & Care Plan, you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority (if the school is a Community, Voluntary-Controlled, Voluntary-Aided, Foundation or Trust school).

In this case, you can write to the Complaints Manager who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. The Complaints Team will aim to investigate your complaint within 25 working days; however the investigation may take longer (up to 65 working days) in complex cases. When your complaint has been fully investigated the Complaints Manager will write to let you know the outcome. S/he will give the reasons for the outcome, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and anyone else concerned in the investigation. Parents who remain dissatisfied following further investigation by the Local Authority have the right to complain to the Secretary of State who may decide to conduct an additional investigation.

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

- You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Useful contacts

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ

Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE

Web: www.pohwer.net

Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE

Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Phone: **0345 345 4345**

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN

Web: www.nyas.net

Phone: **0345 345 4345**

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)

Registry Office Block
CHR102
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF

Web: www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership

Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Phone: **01992 555847**

Family Lives

(Formerly Parentline Plus)

15-17 The Broadway
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5HZ

Web: www.familylives.org.uk

Phone: **0808 800 2222**

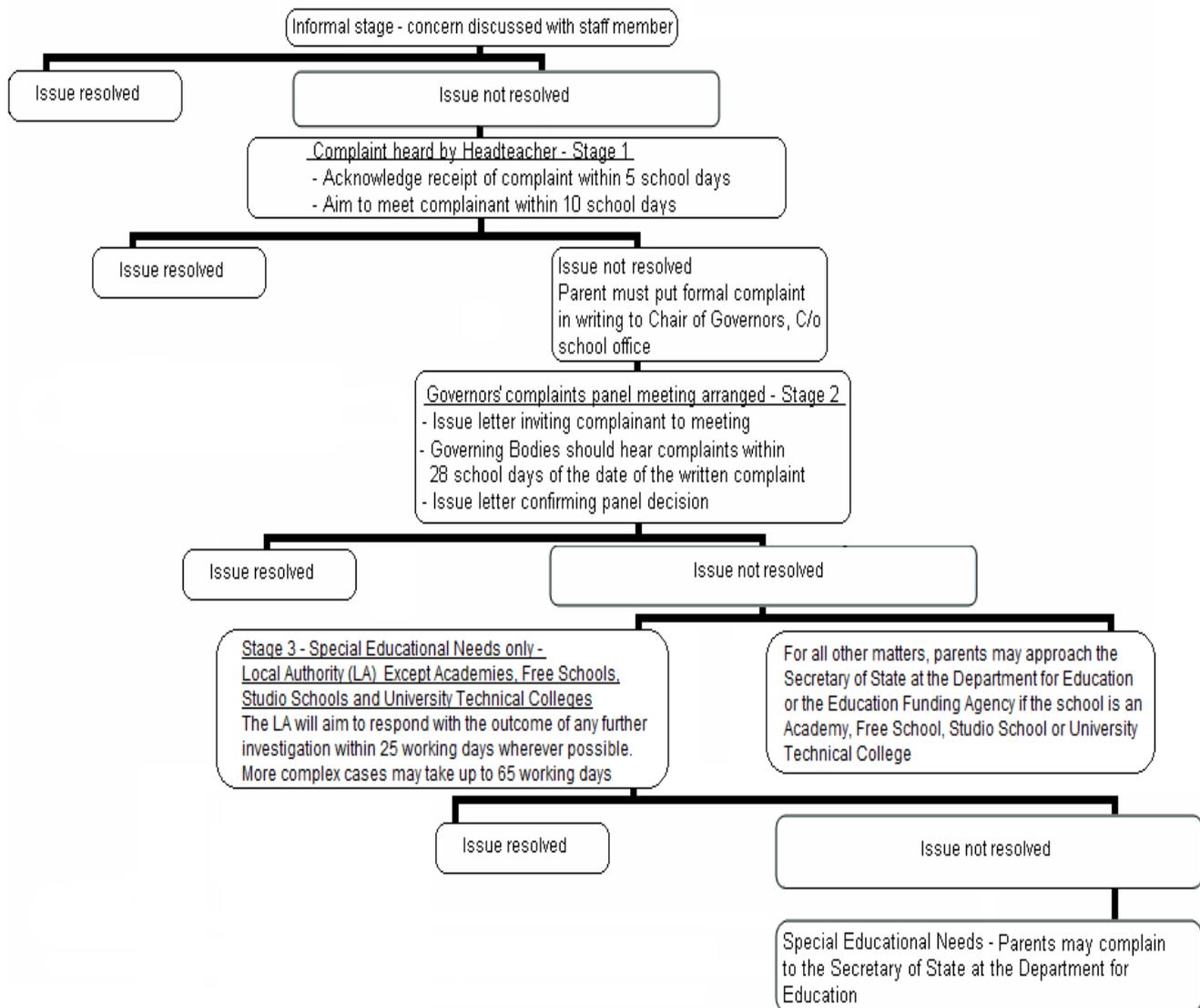
COMPLAINTS BY SCHOOL STAFF OR PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

This follows a similar process as to that in the previous section except that the complaint will always be directed to the headteacher, unless the complaint is about the latter, in which case the complaint would be directed straight to Stage 2.

MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS

The Personnel Committee will monitor the complaints received each term and at the end of the academic year. These will be reported termly to the Governing Body. Due to the difficulties of collecting complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and pre-stage 1 (informal), and that in most cases the nature tends to be comparatively minor, the monitoring of complaints will only be applied to stages 2 (formal) and 3 (appeals). This will be reconsidered as part of the annual policy review.

Dealing with complaints



Appendix 1

Complaint form

Please complete and return to the headteacher 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: