



Carfield

Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Approved by (Governor Committee)	Next Review
Adopted September 2023	Becky Webb	And Wynne	September 2024
October 2024	Hannan Mohammed	Derek Grover	October 2025

Complaints Procedure

The Carfield Primary School Governing Board have adopted the Sheffield City Council complaints procedure.

In order to investigate complaints as fully as possible, the Governing Board have implemented a staged approach.

1. The First Stage

Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally

1.1 Guidelines

- 1.1.1 It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. Parents and carers need not only to be listened to but also to feel that they have been listened to. The underlying principle is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Nevertheless, anyone receiving a complaint will ensure that a record of the complaint and its outcome is maintained.
- 1.1.2 The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved immediately with the class teacher, school secretary or Head Teacher, depending on whom it is parents or carers first approach. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. It may, on occasions, be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of the parent or carer.
- 1.1.3 It may be unclear as to whether a parent or carer is asking a question or expressing an opinion, rather than making a complaint. Similarly, a parent or carer may want a preliminary discussion or be seeking clarification of an issue in order to decide whether he or she wishes to take the matter further.
- 1.1.4 The school will inform staff that they have the right to advice or representation from their trade union at any stage of the complaints procedure once it becomes clear that a complaint is being made about a member of staff.

1.2. Procedures

- 1.2.1 Parents and carers will be given an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff who will clarify the nature of the concern or complaint and reassure them that the school will hear the concern or complaint and attempt to resolve it at the earliest stage. The member of staff may explain how the matter or incident arose and the issues connected with it. It may be helpful at this point for the parent or

carer to identify what outcome is expected.

- 1.2.2 The member of staff will need to respond appropriately, taking into account the status and seriousness of the complaint. Hopefully, the matter can then be resolved immediately.
- 1.2.3 If the member of staff first approached cannot deal with the matter immediately, then they should make a clear note of the date, the name and contact address or telephone number given by the complainant. The Head Teacher should be informed accordingly.
- 1.2.4 All members of staff are aware of the procedure for referring a complaint to the staff member having responsibility for the area about which a particular concern has been raised. They will also ensure that when a referral has been made, this is followed through.
- 1.2.5 Where the concern relates to the actions of the Head Teacher, the complainant should be advised to contact the Chair of the School Governing Board. In such circumstances, a Governors Complaints Panel comprising three members of the School's Governing Board will be convened.
- 1.2.6 The member of staff dealing with the concern or complaint will make sure that the parent or carer is clear about what action, if any, or monitoring of the issue has been agreed, putting this in writing if this appears to be the best way of advising the complainant clearly about the resolution of the matter.
- 1.2.7 In instances where no satisfactory solution has been found within 10 school working days of the complaint having been made, parents or carers will be given clear information both verbally and in writing about how to progress their complaint and about any independent advice available to them.

2. The Second Stage

Referral to the Head Teacher for Formal Investigation

2.1 Guidelines

- 2.1.1 At this stage, it will be apparent that a formal complaint has been registered and an appropriate response will be required. In some instances, the Head Teacher will already have been involved in looking at the matter; in others, it will be their first involvement. In all instances, it will be helpful for the Head Teacher (or other designated member of staff) to use policy to ensure consistency and to ensure that regard is paid to the stages of the complaints procedure.
- 2.1.2 The Head Teacher has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school. They have responsibility for the implementation of the complaints procedure including decisions concerning their involvement at the various stages. A staged complaints procedure should ensure that more than one individual is involved in hearing and investigating the complaint.
- 2.1.3 The Head Teacher will make arrangements to ensure that their involvement does not predominate at each stage of a particular complaint. Arrangements may be made for other staff to deal with parent and carer concerns at Stage 1, allowing for the Head Teacher's involvement at Stage 2, should this be necessary. At any stage, the Head Teacher may designate another member of staff to collect information and prepare a response.

2.2 Procedures

- 2.2.1 Formal complaints will need to be submitted in writing. In exceptional circumstances, the school may consider progressing a verbal complaint where there are believed to be sufficient grounds for doing so. The Head Teacher (or designated member of staff) will acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days of receipt.
- 2.2.2 Carfield Primary School will be sensitive to the particular needs of parents or carers who may have difficulty in making a written complaint or for whom English is not their first language.
- 2.2.3 An acknowledgement will provide a brief outline of the school's complaints procedure and an expected date for the provision of a response. This will normally be within 10 school working days. If this proves to be unworkable, the complainant will be provided with an explanation for the delay and given a revised date for the provision of a response.
- 2.2.4 The Head Teacher will provide an opportunity for a complainant to meet with them in order to supplement any information previously provided. It will be made clear to the complainant that, if they wish, they may be

accompanied at any meeting by a friend, relative or representative to speak on their behalf; and that interpreting facilities can be made available should this be necessary.

- 2.2.5 The Head Teacher will, if necessary, interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint concerns a pupil, the pupil will also be interviewed. In some instances, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable may be asked to attend. It may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, to invite a parent or carer to be present when the Head Teacher interviews a pupil. The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings, telephone conversations and other contacts made during the course of investigation of a complaint.
- 2.2.6 Once all relevant information has been gathered, the Head Teacher will formulate a written response to the complainant. The Head Teacher may, additionally, suggest a meeting to discuss the complaint and seek a resolution. The written response will include a full explanation of the conclusion reached and the reasons for that conclusion. Where appropriate, this will include details of the action taken to resolve the complaint. If the complaint concerns a member of staff and action is to be taken against the member of staff concerned, the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' will be used.
- 2.2.7 The complainant will be advised that, should they find the Head Teacher's response inadequate and they wish to take matters further, that they should notify the Chair of the School's Governing Board within 10 school working days of receipt. The Chair will arrange for a Governor's Complaints Panel to investigate the complaint and would normally chair this panel, unless an alternative chair has designated by the Governing Board.
- 2.2.8 Where a complaint has been made against the Head Teacher, arrangements will be made for the initial investigation to be conducted by a single Governor (usually the Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing Board) or a suitably constituted Governing Board Complaints panel who will undertake Stage 2 of these procedures.

3. The Third Stage

Appeal to the Chair of the Governing Board or Governing Board Complaints Panel

3.1 Guidelines

- 3.1.1 It is anticipated that complaints will rarely reach this stage. It is, however, important that should they do so, any appeal is not only independent and impartial but that it will be seen to be so. All complaints reaching Stage 3 will have done so because the complainant has not been satisfied with

the response provided by the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the original complaint had been about the Head Teacher) at an earlier stage of the procedure. Therefore, governors who have had no prior knowledge of or involvement in the complaint must as far as is possible, handle any appeal.

- .3.1.2 As this is the last stage at which a resolution may be reached, every effort will be made to either mediate or conciliate. Parents or carers may therefore wish to seek assistance from the Advice and Conciliation Service, particularly if contact has not previously been made.
- 3.1.3 Appeals must be made in writing. In exceptional circumstances, the school may consider progressing a verbal complaint where there are believed to be sufficient grounds for doing so. The appeal must state clearly why it is felt that the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily and, wherever possible, supported by documentary evidence or witness statements.
- 3.1.4 In the unlikely event of pupils needing to be interviewed, care will be taken to ensure that parental permission is obtained. In all instances a single governor will interview the pupil and parents or carers will be given the opportunity to attend but, if they are unable to do so, a nominated member of staff will accompany the pupil.

3.2 Procedures

- 3.2.1 Upon receipt of a written request by a complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 3, the procedures outlined below will be followed:
 - 1. The Chair of the Governing Board will write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the written request.
 - 2. The acknowledgment will inform the complainant that the Chair of Governors or three members of the school's Governing Board, as appropriate, will investigate the complaint within 20 school working days of receipt of the request.
- 3.2.2 The acknowledgement will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further information or documentation relevant to the complaint. Any such documentation must, however, be received in sufficient time for this to be sent to the Chair or Panel members charged with conducting the investigation.
- 3.2.3 If a Governors Complaints Panel is conducting the investigation, the Chair of Governors will convene a panel elected from members of the school's Governing Board. Panel members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally speaking, it is not appropriate for the Head Teacher or other staff members to have a place on the panel. Governors will bear in mind the advantages of having a parent or carer (who is also a governor) on the panel. Governors will

be sensitive of issues of race, gender and religious affiliation and the make-up of the panel will, if possible, reflect the three categories of LA, Parent and Community governors.

- 3.2.4 The Chair will ensure that the Panel hears the complaint within 20 school working days of receiving the request. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the Panel has been determined.
- 3.2.5 The Chair will write and inform the complainant, Head Teacher, relevant witnesses and Panel members of the date, time and venue of the meeting, 10 school working days in advance. The details of the complaint available at that time should also be sent in writing to the Head Teacher.
- 3.2.6 Notice of the Panel meeting sent to the complainant will also inform him/her of their right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, advocate or interpreter. This notice will also explain how the Panel meeting will be conducted and of the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel at least 5 school working days in advance of the meeting. The Chair will also invite the Head Teacher to attend and prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint.
- 3.2.7 The Head Teacher may invite members of staff who have been directly involved in matters or issues raised by the complainant to respond in writing or, at the discretion of the Panel Chair, to attend the meeting in person. All concerned, including the complainant, will receive all relevant documentation, including the Head Teacher's report, at least 5 school working days in advance of the meeting.
- 3.2.8 It is the responsibility of the panel Chair to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- 3.2.9 The aim of the Panel meeting shall be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. It has to be recognised, however, that whilst the intention is to ensure that any complaint, which reaches this stage, is seen to have been treated seriously, it may not be possible to make recommendations that fully satisfy the complainant.
- 3.2.10 The Panel will be sympathetic to the fact that some parents and carers will not be used to dealing with groups of people in formal situations such as this and may, therefore, feel intimidated by the setting. It is suggested therefore that the Chair ensures proceedings are as informal as the circumstances allow.
- 3.2.11 Should either party wish to produce previously undisclosed or uncirculated documentation, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting to allow sufficient time for each party to consider and respond to this.

3.2.12 At Stage 3, the complainant and the Head Teacher, together with and other staff who are involved with the complaint will be interviewed separately in order that the Panel can form a clear and independent view of the complaint. The interviews, which can be arranged to run consecutively, will allow for:

- The complainant to explain the nature of their complaint(s)
- The Head Teacher to explain the school's response to the complaint
- Panel members to have an opportunity to question both complainant and Head Teacher
- All parties to have a right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and the Panel to the opportunity of questioning all witnesses
- Parents and carers, Head Teacher and staff to have the right of representation at the meeting if they so wish

3.2.13 The Chair will explain to the complainant and the Head Teacher that the Panel will consider its decision and a written response sent to both parties within 15 school working days.

3.2.14 The Panel will consider the complain and all the evidence presented and

- a) Reach a unanimous or at least a majority decision on the complaint;
- b) Decide upon the most appropriate course of action to be taken to resolve the complaint and,
- c) Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature does not arise in future

3.2.15 Recommendations will be reported to the Governing Board at an appropriate time and a written statement outlining the decision of the Panel will be sent to the Head Teacher and complainant. Should any action need to be taken against a member of staff, in order to protect their rights, the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' will be used.

3.2.16 Governors will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and accompanying notes are kept on file. These records will be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

Is there a time limit for complaining?

Complaints should be made to the school as soon as possible and certainly within three months. If the school is not contacted within that time, normally no further action will be taken in respect of a complaint. However, any exceptional reasons given for not meeting this time limit will always be taken into account.

4. Further recourse

4.1 The Secretary of State for Education

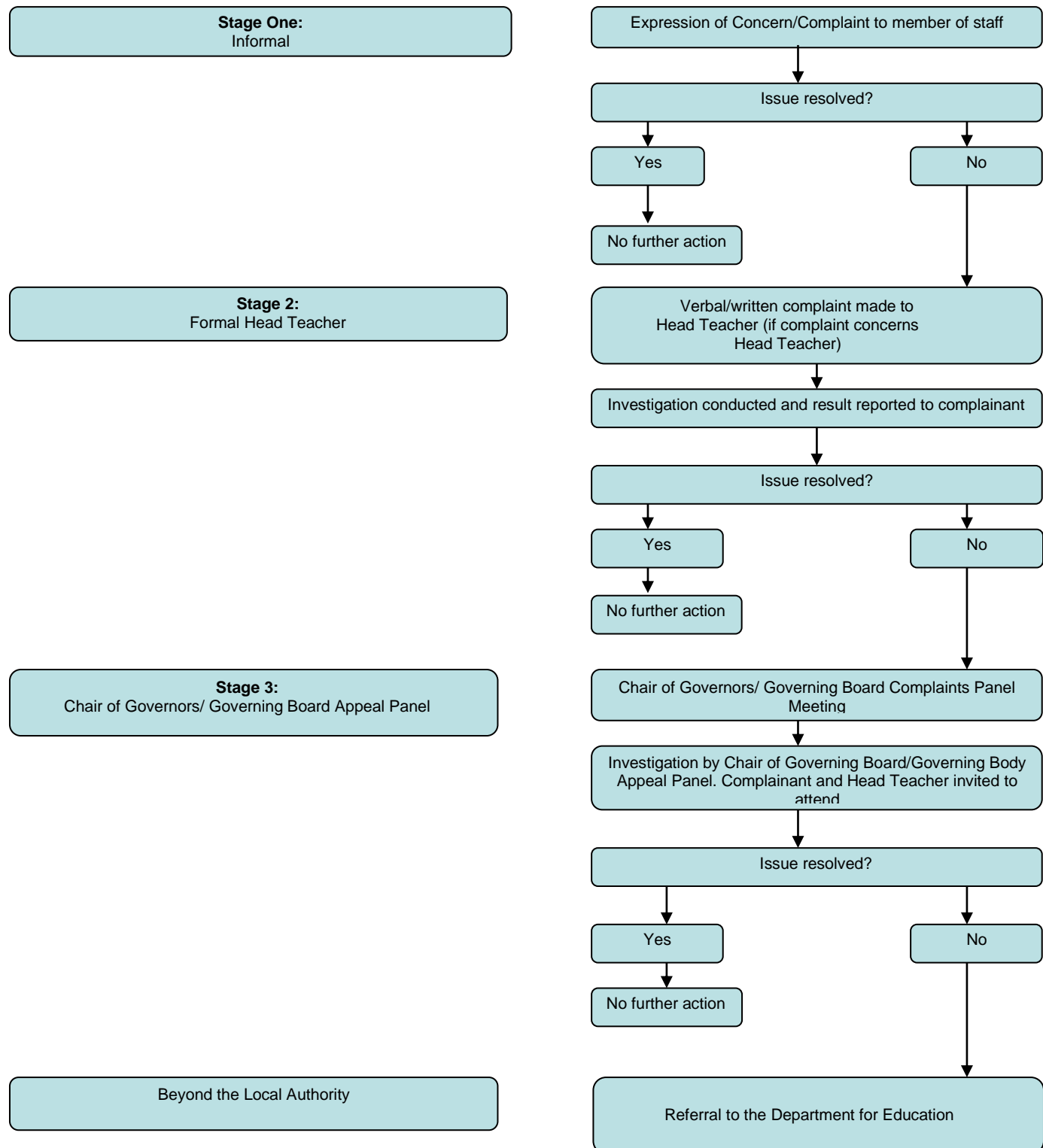
Complaints about school are almost always settled within school but, from 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

Further information is available on the DfE website at www.education.gov.uk




Complaints about academies

Academies operate independently of local authorities. If you have a complaint about an academy which you have been unable to resolve, you should contact the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Further information is available on the website at www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/armslengthbodies/b00199952/the-education-funding-agency/contacts

Flowchart Summary of Stages of Complaints Procedure



Communication Flow Chart

Learning/behaviour		Pastoral	learning or physical need or safeguarding	Issues relating to staff	Concerns and queries relating to school administration
	Where a concern/complaint is related to teaching and learning, trips, topic, homework and behaviour	Where a concern/complaint is related to pastoral needs: (Pastoral care covers our support of your child's individual needs, their emotional wellbeing and helping them with any personal problems they may be experiencing at school.)	Where a concern is related to a special need and you feel an adjustment may be required to support successful learning e.g. issues related to ASI (autistic spectrum indicators), dyslexia or dyspraxia or physical disabilities	Headteacher: Ms Hannan Mohammed.	Business Support Manager: Vicky Elliot
Step 1	Please raise your concern with your child's class teacher by speaking to them afterschool or by contacting them by Email: enquiries@carfield.sheffield.sch.uk to arrange a meeting after school first instance.				
Class teacher	If the class teacher is unable to support your query then please contact:				
	Phase Leaders	Pastoral Lead	SENCOs		
					
Step 2	Nursery and Reception Lead: Fran Gregory Y1 and Y2 Lead: Gemma Crutchley Y3, Y4 Lead: Jonathan Crabtree Y5 and Y6 Lead: Barry Wood	Pastoral Lead Mrs Emma Williams	EYFS SENCO: Isabelle Keally KS1 SENCO: Scarlett Daniels KS2 SENCO: Bethan Arthur (Deputy Headteacher) Please note Bethan Arthur still has the full overview of the SEND provision.		
Phase leader/SENCO/Pastoral Lead					

Model School Complaints Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

School:

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?

Model School Complaints Form

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

For Official use by the school

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Guidance on Listening to Complaints

As soon as you realise you are listening to a complaint, remember the following points:

- **Take responsibility**

Try not to keep transferring an angry person on from one place to another. Make sure you know the contact person for anything you cannot deal with yourself.

- **Don't be flippant**

First impressions count. You and the school may be judged on your immediate reaction.

- **Treat all complaints seriously**

However small or trivial an issue may seem to you, the complaint itself will be an important one for anyone who takes the trouble to complain.

- **Be courteous**

Be sympathetic and helpful, but do not blame other colleagues.

- **Say who you are**

If you are unknown to the complainant, introduce yourself.

- **Ask for their name and use it**

Anonymous complaints are acceptable only in exceptional circumstances.

- **Take time to figure out exactly what the problem is**

It is easy for someone to forget to tell you an important detail, particularly if they are upset or annoyed.

- **Don't take the complaint personally**

To an angry parent or carer, YOU are the school and the only one they can put their feelings to right now.

- **Stay cool and calm**

Do not argue with the complainant. Be polite and try to establish exactly what it is he or she believes the issue to be.

- **Check you are being understood**

Make certain that the parent or carer understands what you are saying. Avoid using jargon- it can cause confusion and annoyance to someone 'not in the know'.

- **Don't rush**

Take your time. Let the complainant have their say and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problem before replying and attempting to find a solution or suggesting the next step.