

# Threshfield Primary School Complaints Policy

## Background

The Education Act 2002 requires governing bodies of schools to have a procedure to deal with complaints about the school and any facilities or services that the school provides. The procedure must also be publicised.

From 31 July 2012, under section 45 of the Education Act 2011 the duty on Local Authorities to consider complaints about the curriculum, sex education and religious worship in maintained schools was removed.

Also, from 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the local authority should now be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education. The school has accordingly adopted a complaints procedure in accordance with the following principles:

## Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the school and any community facilities or services that the school provides.

## Principles of the Procedure

**Informal resolution** – If possible, complaints will be resolved through informal discussion and negotiation.

**The procedure will be easy to understand and to use** – the language will be simple and can be made available in different languages and formats where necessary.

**Publicity and accessibility** – The procedure will be well publicised and easily accessible to all via:

- leaflets sent out with other school material and available in school on request
- information in the School Prospectus;
- on the school website at: [www.threshfieldprimary.co.uk](http://www.threshfieldprimary.co.uk)

**Impartiality and confidentiality** – all complaints will be dealt with impartially and subject to the need to investigate the matter fully, in confidence.

**Time limits** – complaints will be dealt with within clear time limits and everyone will be kept fully informed.

## Full and fair investigation –

- a. the complaint will be fully investigated;
- b. if necessary and at the discretion of the Chair of the Governing Body an independent person will be appointed by the Chair to conduct the investigation;
- c. the principles of fairness and impartiality will be fully observed at all times.
- d. If the complaint is justified, appropriate redress will be offered.

**Addressing any problems** – any issues identified through the investigation of the complaint as requiring action will be addressed.

**Support** – the complainant may request assistance or support during the process, and may be accompanied to any meetings by a relative, friend or adviser, by prior arrangement.

**Support for staff** – staff will be given the same level of support as the complainant.

**Anonymous complaints** – Will be investigated but only insofar as it is possible and practicable.

**Vexatious complaints** – will be assessed to decide whether any new issues have been raised. If so then these will be investigated in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.

**Training** – all staff will be briefed in handling complaints to seek to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to all complaints received.

**Persistent complainants** – complaints will be thoroughly investigated but will not be re-opened unless relevant new issues are brought forward.

**Monitoring** – the Head teacher will keep records of all complaints and will report to the Governing Body on a regular basis. This will be for monitoring purposes only and will present an overview of the types of complaints and data in terms of numbers etc. No details should be given in respect of names or other identifying features.

The Complaints Procedure is attached below (Appendix 1), together with additional Guidance, and the Complaints Procedure information leaflet for parents & carers (Appendix 2)

Review

This Policy shall be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years.

*This Policy Reviewed and Approved: June 2014*

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Threshfield Primary School Complaints Procedure**

#### **Exceptions to the Procedure**

This procedure does not cover those areas of school life for which other procedures exist including:

(a) staff grievance and capability procedures

Human Resources

(b) staff disciplinary procedures

(c) child protection investigations

(d) admission appeals<sup>1</sup> Local Area Office

(d) exclusion appeals<sup>2</sup> Local Area Office –

Behaviour Support Service

(e) appeals against the decisions of the LA about a child's special educational needs and provisions

Local Area Office – SEN Officer

Complaints involving the following areas:

- (f) Human Rights Schools are recommended to seek advice from Legal Services at County Hall.
- (g) Race Relations
- (h) Sex Discrimination
- (i) Disability Discrimination
- (j) Age Discrimination

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **a) Informal Stage**

Anyone with a concern about any aspect of the school is encouraged to raise their concern, either personally or through someone else, with their child's class teacher in the first instance.

The concern may also/then/instead be raised with the Head teacher, either through discussion or in writing and discussion.

Everything possible should be done at this stage to resolve the matter.

If the concern cannot be resolved by these informal means, or is about the Head teacher, then the person expressing the concern will be told of the option of pursuing a formal complaint and be provided with a copy of this procedure.

### **b) Formal Complaint – Stage One**

Formal complaints must be detailed **in writing as a formal complaint addressed to the Chair of Governors** (a complaints form is available for this purpose). To ensure that the complaint is properly investigated, it must be as clear as possible. If necessary clarification will be sought from the complainant about any aspect of the complaint which is unclear;

If a complainant requires help to put their complaint in writing then they will be offered the opportunity to meet with a designated member of staff/the Head teacher who will make a written note of the complaint and agree it with the complainant;

The Chair of Governors will send an acknowledgement within 5 working days of receiving the written complaint and will confirm: details of the complaint to be investigated; who will be investigating the complaint; that a substantive response to the complaint will be given within 20 working days of receipt. If this timescale cannot be met an explanation will be given with a revised timescale;

The complaint will be investigated in accordance with the principles of the Complaints Policy; The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within 20 days of receipt of the complaint (or by date given in the acknowledgement letter) and advise him/her of the outcome of the investigations.

If the complaint is upheld, the complainant will be informed accordingly and given an indication of the steps that will be taken to put matters right.

The school will seek guidance from Legal Services at County Hall before making any admissions which may lead to a legal claim. If, on the basis of the information available, it is not possible to arrive at a definitive decision on the complaint the complainant will be informed accordingly with the reasons why;

The complainant will also be informed that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation then they have the right to appeal against the outcome to the Governors' Complaints Appeals Committee and how to do it.

### **b) Formal Complaint – Stage Two**

Requests for a hearing of the complaint by the Governors' Complaints Appeals Committee must be in writing and addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body at the School; the Clerk will acknowledge the request within 5 working days of receiving the request

The Clerk will ask the Head teacher (or other senior staff representative) to attend the hearing to present the school's case.

If written submissions are to be made by the Head teacher they should be submitted to the Clerk at least 10 working days before the hearing to enable copies to be provided to the committee, the complainant and any other relevant parties.

At least 7 working days prior to the meeting the clerk will:

- notify all parties of the date, time and place of the hearing;
- provide all parties with a copy of any written representations submitted;
- provide all parties with details of the format of the hearing;
- ask the parties whether they have any particular needs for the meeting e.g. induction loop, translator etc;
- confirm who will be in attendance at the hearing or whether they wish to rely upon written submissions.
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Within 5 working days following the hearing the clerk shall:

- inform all the parties concerned in writing of the decision(s) of the Committee; if the Committee has agreed to request the LA to review the process by which the committee arrived at its decision then all parties will be informed of this; the complainant will also be informed that if he/she remains dissatisfied then they may write to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education.

## **THE COMPLAINTS APPEALS COMMITTEE – GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS**

### **The Complaints Appeals Committee -**

At the first meeting in the autumn term Threshfield Primary School governing body will establish a committee whose role is to determine appeals against stage 1 decisions on formal complaints made under the school's complaints procedure. The committee will only hear those complaints which have reached stage 2 of the procedure. i.e. after the complaint has already been investigated by the Head teacher/designated Governor for complaints (Chair).

### Constitution

Whilst it is for the governing body to determine the constitution of the committee it is strongly recommended that this should be any three governors, apart from staff governors and associate members, as available at the time of the appeal. Because of the need to provide confidence in the impartiality of the committee staff governors should not be appointed to the committee. Equally, associate members should not be appointed to the committee because they may not vote on a range of issues including the budget, financial commitments of the governing body, admissions and pupil discipline and may therefore find their effectiveness curtailed if any of these issues form part of the complaint.

### Terms of reference

The terms of reference suggested for the committee are:

“to consider appeals in respect of complaints made pursuant to the school's complaints procedure including full delegated authority to:

- dismiss the appeal in whole or in part;
- uphold the appeal in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.”

### Delegation

The committee should be given full delegated authority to act.

### **The Complaints Appeals Committee – Procedure (Stage 2)**

#### Receipt of complaint

Schools will have followed the complaints procedure up to this point and the complaints committee will only normally become involved after the complaint has been investigated at Stage 1 of the procedure. The complainant should have written to and told the Clerk to the governing body that he/she remains dissatisfied with the

Stage 1 decision and now wishes the matter to be considered by the committee at Stage 2.

### General Procedure

The Clerk should acknowledge receipt of the complainant's letter within 5 working days of its receipt. See sample letter 'A'.

### Arranging the hearing

The Clerk will make the necessary arrangements for the hearing to take place within 20 working days taking into account the following matters: check that 3 governors, **not previously involved in the complaint** are available, remembering not to include staff governors or associate members.

If the complaint is against a member of staff ensure that the members of the committee are not also members of the Staff Dismissal Committee (or Staff Dismissal Appeals Committee);

Is the preferred date and time of the hearing convenient to **all** the parties involved?;

Is the school an appropriate place for the hearing or would a more neutral venue be preferable?

Is the chosen venue readily accessible to all?

Do the seating arrangements strike the right balance between the formality of the hearing and the need to create a more relaxed atmosphere?

Will water or soft drinks be available for people during the hearing?

Do any of the parties have any special requirements for the hearing? e.g. Induction loop, translator etc;

Are separate rooms available if any of the parties wish to discuss any relevant matters in private either before or during the hearing?

The Clerk should inform everyone of the arrangements made giving at least 7 clear working days notice and provide everyone with the agenda setting out the format for the hearing. See the sample agenda.

Who should be invited to the hearing?

- The complainant (not forgetting that he/she may be accompanied by a friend or an adviser);
- The Committee;
- The Headteacher, Chair of Governors or designated member of staff whoever investigated the complaint at Stage 2. The Headteacher (with an adviser if they so wish) should make every effort to attend the hearing but if he/she declines to attend it should be borne in mind he/she will not be able to answer questions from the complainant or the committee and this might be unhelpful to the committee in reaching its decision.
- Any witnesses that any of the parties may wish to call to give evidence.

When advising everyone of the arrangements for the hearing remind the complainant and the Headteacher that written submissions must be submitted to the Clerk not less than 7 working days prior to the hearing to enable the Clerk to provide copies in advance to everyone concerned. Written representations when received should be sent by first class post to all the parties concerned.

### The Hearing

The Clerk (and Legal Adviser to the Committee, if any) should arrive early to ensure that the arrangements for the hearing are in order.

The committee should take its place in the hearing room without the complainant, Headteacher or witnesses being present and the clerk should take the opportunity to: clarify any procedural points with the committee; and elect a Chair for the hearing.

The complainant, the Headteacher and their friends or advisers (but not witnesses) should then be invited in to the hearing. **The complainant or the Headteacher, or**

**designated governor (and friends or advisers or witnesses) should not be left alone with the Committee at any time.**

The Chair should open the hearing by introducing him/herself and the members of the committee. He/she should inform everyone of the role of the committee and stress that the committee has had no prior involvement in the complaint and that it will look afresh at all the issues involved and arrive at its own decision on the matter(s). Also, that the decision(s) of the committee is final insofar as the school is concerned. The Chair should then invite everyone else present to introduce themselves and their role in the proceedings.

The Chair should confirm with everyone that they have received a copy of all relevant papers to which they are entitled (ideally the Clerk should do this prior to the meeting and provide a copy of any missing papers – this would help prevent delays at the hearing). It may be helpful to number the pages. If anyone has not received any of the papers they should be provided with a copy and given time to read them and if they request it they should be allowed to do this in private and if necessary confer with their friend/adviser.

The meeting should then follow the format set out in the agenda. If either of the parties' wish to have a recess then the Chair should facilitate that, if at all possible, however the decision to allow a recess is entirely at the discretion of the Chair. If a recess is allowed there should be no discussion on the matters heard thus far and the complainant, the Headteacher, Chair of governors or designated member of staff (or witnesses/friends/advisors) should not be left alone with the committee.

Witnesses should be invited in to the hearing when it is their turn to give evidence. After giving evidence and answering questions witnesses should be invited to leave the hearing if they wish. Alternatively they may remain in the hearing but they should not be allowed to take any further part in the proceedings.

At the conclusion of the hearing the Chair of the committee should thank everyone for their contributions and inform the complainant and the Headteacher that the committee will make its decision in private and that they will be notified of the outcome by the Clerk within 5 working days of the meeting. Everyone, with the exception of the committee and the Clerk, should then leave the meeting whilst the committee deliberates in private. It might be appropriate to ask the complainant, the Headteacher, or designated governor and any witnesses to stay behind for a short while in the event that the committee needs clarification on any point or to give the parties the option to wait to hear the decision in person if the committee expects to reach one within a reasonable length of time. In either of the above circumstances it will be necessary for **ALL** the parties concerned to be present.

#### The Decision process

The committee should consider in private all the evidence submitted. If the committee requires clarification on any point then **all** the parties should be invited back in to the hearing only whilst the committee seeks the necessary clarification. Remember also that this is not an opportunity for anyone to re-open the hearing.

After arriving at its decision the clerk should confirm with the committee that his/her understanding of the decision is correct. The clerk should also seek guidance from the committee about whether it would wish to invite the LA to review the process it undertook to resolve the complaint. The committee has discretion about whether to do this or not.

If the decision of the committee is thought likely to lead to further action by the complainant e.g. a claim for damages, the committee should consult with Legal Services at County Hall before reaching a final conclusion.

#### After the hearing

The clerk should prepare a draft of the letter setting out the decision. This should be approved by the Chair of the committee and signed by him/her prior to being sent to

the complainant and the Headteacher within the agreed 5 working days. See sample letters to be signed by the Chair of the committee.

#### Minutes and reporting to the Governing Body

Draft minutes of the hearing should be prepared and once they have been agreed with the committee the minutes should be signed by the Chair of the committee. They should not be submitted to the governing body nor should a detailed resume of the hearing be given to the governing body. All that should be reported is that a hearing was held and the decision. The reason for this is that there may be issues arising from the complaint that may require further investigation and which may lead to disciplinary action against a member of staff. To give a detailed account of the proceedings of the hearing may be prejudicial to any disciplinary or other proceedings.

#### Records

The records of the complaint should be kept securely in school and retained in accordance with the requirements of the Schools' Information Governance Manual issued by Children and Young Peoples' Service in May 2006.

#### Stage 3 Critical Timescales

##### **Item - Action**

Letter referring complaint to Committee - Acknowledge within 5 working days

Hearing - Within 20 working days

Despatch of Agenda - At least 7 clear working days before the hearing

Receipt of written submissions from complainant and Head - At least 7 working days before the hearing

Send out written submissions (if any) - As soon as possible after receipt

Letter to complainant giving decision of Committee - Not more than 5 working days following the hearing.

## **SAMPLE LETTERS**

### **Letter 'A' – Acknowledgement letter from Clerk**

Dear

#### **Your Complaint**

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter of (insert date) and write to let you know how your appeal will now be dealt with.

A hearing by the Complaints Appeals Committee will be held within 20 working days from the receipt of your complaint i.e. by (insert date). The committee is made up of 3 governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint. The role of the committee is to consider your complaint and the action taken to address the complaint to date together with any information that the Headteacher (*or designated Governor as appropriate*) wishes to put forward. The Committee will then consider in private all the information presented to it and arrive at its decision. The Committee has the authority to:

- dismiss the appeal in whole or in part;
- uphold the appeal in whole or in part;
- decide on any appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that

problems of a similar nature do not recur.

You will be notified in writing of the decision of the committee within 5 days of the meeting.

I will be acting as clerk to the committee and it is my responsibility to make all the necessary arrangements for the meeting and to take the minutes of the meeting and offer procedural guidance only. Any correspondence that you may wish to submit to the committee should be sent to me at the address shown at the head of this letter.

You are entitled to attend the meeting and to present your complaint and you may be accompanied by a friend or an advisor who may speak on your behalf if you so wish. You or your friend or advisor may also submit, in advance, written representations. These will be circulated to the committee and to the Headteacher and must therefore be sent to me to arrive not less than 10 working days prior to the meeting to enable me to do that. If the Headteacher similarly submits any written representations then you will be provided with a copy 5 working days in advance of the meeting. I will contact you again soon to discuss the date, time and venue for the meeting but in the meantime if you have any questions in connection with this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Complaints Appeals Committee of Threshfield Primary School Governing Body

**Letter 'B'- letter of decision to complainant – rejecting complaint**

Dear

**Your Complaint – Complaints Appeals Committee Hearing– (insert date of hearing)**

May I first of all thank you for attending the hearing by the Committee held on (insert date).

The Committee after carefully considering all the information presented to it has decided that no further action should be taken on your complaint for the following reasons:

Set out the reasons for the decision e.g.

- a) It is recognised that an error had occurred at the early stage of the matter the subject of your complaint. Whilst this was regrettable it is the view of the committee, that the early action taken by the Headteacher to correct the error once it was discovered was sufficient to correct the situation.
- b) Because action was taken early there was no evidence to demonstrate that you had suffered materially as a consequence;
- c) The Headteacher has already apologised to you both verbally and in writing for the error;
- d) The Governing Body will be reviewing policies and procedures to see if they can be improved.

\*I have to advise you that the Committee has also decided to invite the Local Authority (LA) to review the process it undertook to resolve the complaint. The LA will consider and advise as appropriate and I will inform you when a reply is received from the LA.

The hearing of your complaint by the Committee brings to an end the formal procedures set out in the school's Complaints Procedure. However, if you remain dissatisfied then you may write to the Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee of Threshfield Primary School Governing Body

\* Insert only if this has been agreed by the Committee

**Letter 'C' - letter of decision to complainant – upholding complaint**

Dear

**Your Complaint – Complaints Appeals Committee Hearing – (insert date of hearing)**

May I first of all thank you for attending the hearing by the Committee held on (insert date).

The Committee after carefully considering all the information presented to it has decided to uphold your complaint for the following reasons:

Set out reasons e.g.

- a) It is recognised that an error had occurred at the early stage of the matter the subject of your complaint and that this error had not been identified or action

taken to correct it;

b) Because the error was not identified you had to pay twice for the music lessons;

Further the Committee has determined that the following action shall be taken to address your complaint:

Set out redress offered e.g.

1) The Headteacher and the Committee offer an unreserved apology to you for the distress caused by the failure to properly address the original error;

2) A refund of the overpaid music lessons fee will be made to you as soon as possible;

3) Measures have now been put in place to prevent any further similar errors occurring.

The Committee hopes that this now brings this matter to a conclusion and thanks you for the professional and courteous way in which you dealt with the matter at the hearing.

\*The Committee has also decided to invite the Local Authority (LA) to review the process it undertook to resolve the complaint. The LA will consider and advise as appropriate and I will inform you when a reply is received from the LA.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee of Threshfield Primary School Governing Body

\* Insert only if this has been agreed by the Committee

### **Sample Agenda**

**A Hearing by the Complaints Appeals Committee of Threshfield Primary School Governing Body will be held at (insert venue) on (insert date) at (insert time)**

**The order of business for the hearing is set out below:**

1. To elect a Chair for the hearing.
2. Introductions.
3. The Chair to outline the procedure.
4. (Name of complainant) to explain his/her\* complaint.
5. Headteacher and the Committee may ask questions.
6. Headteacher to explain the school's response.
7. (Name of complainant) and the Committee may ask questions.
8. The Headteacher to make a statement in summary.
9. (Name of complainant) makes a statement in summary.
10. All, with the exception of the Committee and the Clerk to leave whilst the Committee considers its decision. Written notice of the decision will be sent to the Complainant and the Headteacher within 5 working days of the hearing.
11. The Committee will then consider the complaint in private session.  
Clerk to the Committee of (Name of school) Governing Body

Enclosures: List all the enclosures to accompany the agenda e.g.:

- a) A copy of the school's Complaints Procedure;
- b) A copy of the original complaint;
- c) Copies of letters between the complainant and the school in connection with the complaint;
- d) Copy of written submissions from the complainant and the Headteacher.
- e) Any relevant guidance issued by the LA.

\* delete as appropriate

**HANDLING COMPLAINTS – GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS**

Complaints are an everyday fact of life and every organisation needs to have procedures for handling them. Schools are no different but governors probably find dealing with complaints relating to the school the most difficult to deal with. Governors may feel that they are caught between their loyalty to the school and the expectations of the complainant to have their complaint dealt with fairly. These notes are intended to guide governors faced with having to deal with a complaint

Tensions are likely to occur because on the one hand complainants may see governors as having the authority to directly resolve their complaint whereas the reality is that governors must work within the adopted complaints policy of the school and remain entirely independent. On the other hand, complainants generally have an expectation that governors, particularly parent governors, are there to help them. It is important therefore that governors fully acquaint themselves with the adopted complaints policy of the school and abide by that policy. This does not mean that a governor cannot listen to a complaint if approached by a complainant (although this may preclude the governor from being involved formally at any later stage in the complaints process). If approached by a complainant with a complaint it is important to:

- recognise that for the person concerned the issue is of serious concern (even if it appears trivial);
- LISTEN but avoid commenting on the pros or cons of the complaint;
- point out that as an individual governor you have no power to act;
- check whether the complainant has raised their complaint with the school; if not, advise them to do so and refer them to the school's complaints procedure;
- consider whether it is appropriate to draw the matter to the attention of the headteacher 'for information' in a totally non-judgmental way, making it clear that this does not indicate siding with the complainant.

Sometimes the concern/complaint will have implications for school policy or procedures. If so these should normally be picked up during the investigation of the complaint, if not, it may be appropriate to raise the general issue at a governing body meeting. **However, this should not be done until the complaint has been dealt with fully.** To do otherwise may seriously prejudice dealing with the complaint in accordance with the complaints procedure and any action that might flow from the investigation of the complaint e.g. staff disciplinary matters.

## **HOW TO LISTEN TO COMPLAINTS – GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS AND STAFF**

A natural reaction when listening to a complainant is to be defensive, but this is usually counter productive. When you realise that you are listening to a complaint, try to remember the following:

**Say who you are** If you are unknown to the person, introduce yourself.

**Ask for their name and use it** Anonymous complaints are acceptable only where there are special circumstances.

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

**Stay cool and calm** Do not argue - be polite and try to find out exactly what the person thinks is going wrong, or has gone wrong.

**Don't 'pass the buck'** Do not keep transferring the complainant from one place to another.

Make sure you know the contact person for anything you cannot deal with yourself. If necessary offer to make enquiries and arrange for the correct person to contact the complainant.

**Treat every complaint individually**

Even if you have already received several similar complaints the same day, it is probably the complainant's first chance to have their say.

**Treat all complaints seriously**

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

**Take time to find 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 or upset person, YOU are the school, and the only one they can put their feelings to right now.

**Don't rush** Take your time. Let people have their say, and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problems before replying and attempting to find a solution or offer a next step.

**Check you are being understood**

Make sure that the person understands what you are saying. Do not use jargon - it can cause confusion and annoyance to someone 'not in the know' or for whom English is a second language.

**Check that you have understood the complaint**

It is important to ensure that you have understood the complaint. Check with the complainant that you have understood them correctly and confirm any points that might be unclear or confused.

**Write down what you have been told**

To avoid any possible misunderstanding it is useful to write down what you have been told and if necessary provide a copy of your note to the complainant and ask them to confirm that it is accurate.

**Do offer the School's Complaints Procedure to the complainant**

Trying to deal with a complaint and not making them aware of the complaints procedure can cause confusion and make matters worse and result in "old ground" having to be covered twice.

**Consider any Learning Outcomes**

Complaints may inform better practice/service and this should be viewed as a positive outcome of managing complaints.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Threshfield Primary School**

#### **Overview of Complaints procedure for Parents & Carers. What to do if you have a concern or a complaint.**

We aim to work closely with parents and carers so that all children can play and learn happily at school. We view all concerns in a positive way, as it helps the school improve its practices. However, sometimes problems do occur and the best person to talk to first is usually your child's class teacher.

If you are still worried or concerned, the head teacher will be happy to talk to you at a mutually convenient time. Please contact the school office to make an appointment to talk to the Head teacher or write to the Head teacher explaining your concern and she will get in touch with you to discuss this.

If the Head teacher cannot resolve the issue at this informal stage, or the concern is about the Head teacher, you should then write a formal letter of complaint to the Chair of Governors.

This is part of a full procedure which all schools have in place; it has been set out by the Local Authority and approved by the Governing Body. Full details of our complaints procedure can be requested from the School Office or look on the school's website for further information.

**Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have a concern, or for further information about this complaints procedure.**

## **INFORMATION LEAFLET**

**How do I let the school know that I have a concern or complaint?**

### **Informal Stage**

The first action you need to take is to **contact your child's class teacher** and let the school know as soon as possible that you have a concern or a complaint and give the school the opportunity to investigate the matter properly. Most concerns or complaints can be sorted out this way. Remember, do not leave it too long to report your concern because it can be difficult to investigate something that happened some time ago.

If you feel that the class teacher has not resolved the issue, you can now **arrange to speak to the Head teacher**, usually via an appointment for a meeting made through the school office.

You may also make a written record of your complaint, which may help to clarify the issue. The Head teacher will be happy to discuss any concerns with you and through discussion, help to resolve them. You will be able to take a friend, relative or adviser with you to any meeting arranged with the Head teacher, but if you do you must tell the Head teacher in advance that you will be accompanied. The Head teacher may also wish to be accompanied at the meeting, depending on the nature of your concern.

This is known as the "informal" stage and the school will do everything possible to address your concerns at this stage; in most cases, concerns will be easily resolved in this way.

### **Formal Complaint Stage One**

If you feel that your concerns have not been resolved at this point, or the complaint is against the Head teacher, you may make a formal complaint through the formal complaints procedure. All schools have in place a complaints procedure. This is a formal process which enables you and the school to address your concerns.

To begin this process, you must **write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school, stating that you wish to make a formal complaint**. You must then explain your complaint and (if the Headteacher has previously considered the complaint, why you are dissatisfied with the response and) what outcome you hope to achieve briefly and clearly. There is a form available from school (see below or ask in the school office) to complete for this purpose, or

you may write a letter. The Chair or a Governor or Governors delegated by them will investigate your complaint. This may include meeting with you. You may be accompanied at any meeting by a relative, friend or adviser but you must tell the Chair in advance that you will be accompanied. The Chair (or the investigator(s)) will then speak with and/or write to you with the outcome of their investigations.

### **Formal Complaint Stage Two**

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you can **write to the Clerk to the Governing Body at the school and ask that your complaint be considered by the Complaints Appeals Panel of the Governing Body**. The Panel will not include any Governor who was involved in the prior investigation of the complaint or who has prior knowledge of the complaint. The Clerk to the Governing Body will arrange a hearing by the Panel and you will be invited to attend the hearing (with a relative, friend or adviser if you wish) to explain your complaint. The Clerk will write to you and make sure that you are kept fully informed and guide you through the procedure.

After the hearing, the Chair of the Appeals Panel will write to you and let you know the Panel's decision.

### **If I am still not satisfied is there anything else that I can do?**

Once the Panel has made its decision then **that is the final step in the school's Complaints Procedure**. If you feel that the governing body has acted or intends to act unreasonably or that it has failed to discharge its duties, then you can write to the Secretary of State via the Department for Education.

## **Threshfield Primary School Complaints Procedure Form**

It will help us if you use this form to make your complaint, but please write a letter if you prefer, covering all the points on the form. Please continue your answers on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

When you have filled in the form, send it to The Chair of Governors, c/o the school.

We will only process your personal data in order to respond to your complaints. In general it will be used for administrative and statistical purposes.

Your name Mr \_ Ms \_ Mrs \_ Miss \_ Other .....

First name (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Surname (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Your

address

Postcode

Daytime

tel. no.

Mobile tel.

no.

Email

address

Do you have any special requirements, for example if English is not your first language, disabilities?

Have you contacted the school about this matter before? Yes \_ No \_

If yes, who did you contact, when and how?

Have you received a reply? Yes \_ No \_

If so, when was this?

What is your complaint? How would you like to see the matter resolved?

Please use additional sheets if required

If you have any documents to support your compliment, comment or complaint, please send them with this form. Please indicate if you would like them returned to you.

We will send an acknowledgement within 5 working days of receiving your communication and will tell you what is happening. If a further response is required, this should reach you within 20 working days.