

## Policy: Complaints Policy

Date: April 2019

Review date: April 2020

Authorised by: Governing Body

Updated by: Steering Committee



At Upton St Leonards we take the views and feelings of parents very seriously and we work hard to foster good relationships among the school community. Whilst the following procedures have been put in place to deal with formal complaints, it is hoped that in the majority of instances it will be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties without the need for formal procedures.

If a parent is unhappy about something at school, then they have the right to make a complaint. Most parental concerns may be dealt with informally by the pupil's class teacher. Should that prove unsuccessful, parents should speak to the Head Teacher. If the Head Teacher is unable to resolve the concerns, the parent should contact the Chair of the Governing Body. **A complaint that involves a member of staff and the physical or sexual abuse of children will be dealt with by the staff disciplinary procedures.**

To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, then the governor will refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office or the Clerk to the governing body.

### **Step 1.a – Informal Discussion with the Class Teacher**

It is always useful to talk through the complaint with the person responsible, either by telephone or face to face. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. In most cases it will be necessary to make an appointment with the class teacher and this can be done via the school office.

The Class Teacher will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview and file securely

### **Step 1.b – Informal Discussion with the Head Teacher**

If the complainant does not feel that the class teacher has dealt with the complaint properly, or if the concern is about the conduct of a particular teacher, then the complainant should discuss the matter with the Head Teacher.

The school respects the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the Head Teacher can refer the complainant to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the Head teacher, the complainant can be referred to the chair of governors.

### **Step 2 – Formal Complaint to the Head Teacher**

If informal discussions at Step 1 has not resulted in a resolution, then a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Head Teacher).

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at step 1 as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The Head Teacher should review the action taken at Step 1 and then write to the complainant notifying them of the outcome of the complaint and the next stage of the complaints procedure. This should be done within 10 school days of the Head Teacher's receipt of the formal complaint.

### **Step 3 – Complaint to the Governing Body**

If a resolution still has not been achieved, the next step would be to make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any future Appeals Panel. The complainant needs to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair of Governors, who can be contacted through the school, will acknowledge the letter within 5 school days.

The Chair will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 school days. The Chair may consider it necessary to convene a Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel. The governors' complaints hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. The panel will consist of three or five governors, and the hearing will be formally clerked and minutes will be taken.

### **The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel**

The panel can:

- determine whether the complaint should be upheld or not;
- determine whether appropriate action has been taken in response to the complaint;
- make any appropriate recommendations regarding complaint handling and any action to be taken in response to the complaint.
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

This stage of the procedure will take longer than the previous stages because of the need to convene a meeting of governors. Our aim is to complete the process as quickly as possible, but within a maximum of four working weeks (unless otherwise agreed by the complainant).

### **Notification of the Panel's Decision**

The Clerk to the Governors will notify the complainant of the panel's decision, in writing within 10 school days from the date of the hearing. The Governors decision is final and the matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

### **Step 4 – Taking matters further**

If a parent believes that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then they may make representations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families setting out their concerns in full and enclosing all previous correspondence. The address is: DfE, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.