

# Purbrook



**Infant School**

Complaints Policy

## **Guidance for Parents – What to do when things go wrong**

Purbrook Infant School is committed to encouraging the involvement of parents in the community of the school, and in their child's education. One aspect of this commitment is reflected by recognising that from time to time, things may occur which cause parents concern and that it is important that parents know what steps to take, to make sure that any problems are resolved. These notes are intended to provide guidance to help parents with this process.

### **Who should I talk to?**

Most concerns can be dealt with quickly and effectively through informal discussion with members of staff at school. You are always welcome to come into school to discuss any concerns or problems that have arisen and are encouraged to talk to your child's teacher in the first instance, as the teacher, having knowledge of both your child and events in school, is often the person best placed to help.

### **Will what I say be kept confidential?**

You can expect that matters you raise will be treated in confidence, but parents also need to understand that to resolve problems, and find the best way forward, the teacher may have to make further enquiries. When this is the case, you can expect that this will be done with care, and that teachers will be sensitive to how such circumstances affect your child. This is true for any investigation undertaken by the school at any time.

### **What if it is difficult to talk to my child's teacher about my concern?**

Sometimes you may feel that approaching your child's teacher could be awkward, especially if the matter you wish to discuss may relate to them or another member of staff. If this is the case, or if talking to the teacher does not seem to resolve the problem, you should seek help from the headteacher. The headteacher has responsibility for the day to day running of the school and will recognise that situations like this can be difficult and sensitive. You can expect the headteacher to take the appropriate steps to follow up your concerns, and to discuss the outcome with you. Obviously some time needs to be allowed for this to take place, but in most cases the headteacher will contact you again within a relatively short space of time – within two or three working days as a maximum.

### **Can I talk to somebody who is independent of the school staff?**

It is always possible to approach a school Governor with a concern, however, Governors will always encourage you to approach the headteacher first, if you have not already done so. This is because the headteacher is responsible for the day to day running of the school, and is therefore best placed to follow up and deal with concerns. The Governor will support you in doing this, if you feel that this may be helpful, or alternatively you may wish to ask someone else to support you in explaining the situation.

### **What is the difference between an informal and a formal complaint?**

Each situation mentioned previously is an example of how concerns may be addressed informally. Good communication, and discussion of problems allow issues to be dealt with quickly. The process is a verbal one, and usually one that directly involves you, as the parent, as well as a member of staff and/or the headteacher. Dealing with matters informally does not mean that the concerns are not taken seriously, or that the agreed actions will not be followed through.

A complaint becomes formal when you feel that your concern is too serious to be dealt with informally, or when you feel that informal approaches to the school have not been adequately dealt with. A formal complaint should be made in writing to the headteacher and all investigations resulting from this and any responses made by the school will also be documented.

### **What happens if I need to make a formal complaint?**

Formal complaints need to be made to the headteacher in writing. If the complaint itself relates to the headteacher, then the complaint needs to be made in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body. You will be provided with an explanation of the process.

You will be offered an opportunity to discuss the process and to provide the school with any further information you think should be discussed.

### **What happens next?**

When you receive the formal acknowledgement of your complaint from the headteacher/Chair of Governors, you will also be given an estimated date by which you can expect a full response. The headteacher/Chair of Governors will provide you with an opportunity to discuss the process, and to add any additional information you feel is important. The headteacher/Chair of Governors will also take the appropriate steps to investigate the matter, and will keep written records of the investigation.

As soon as the relevant facts have been established, you will receive a written response from the headteacher/Chair of Governors, which includes an explanation of the decision that has been reached, the reasons for the decision, and the actions that need to be taken to resolve your complaint. The headteacher/Chair of Governors may also offer to discuss this with you. You can expect to receive a formal response within ten working days of the original acknowledgement of your complaint. If a delay is anticipated, the school should keep you informed in writing of progress, and when you are likely to receive details of the outcome of the investigation.

### **I still feel that matters have not been resolved. What should I do?**

It is very rare that a complaint will reach this stage, but if it does, the next step in the process will involve an independent and impartial review by a panel from the Governing Body. You should write to the Governing Body, requesting that your complaint proceeds to this stage. The clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, and will arrange for a panel to meet and review your complaint within ten working days. The Panel will consist of three Governors **who have had no prior involvement in the matter in question**. All relevant documents relating to the complaint will be provided to the panel beforehand.

You will receive notification of the date that the panel will meet five days in advance of the meeting. You will also be informed that you have the right to go to the meeting, and to be accompanied by a legal representative, an interpreter or someone else to support you. The headteacher will also be invited to attend the meeting.

Whilst discussions at the meeting will be documented (usually by the Clerk) the meeting will be as informal as possible, with the main aim being to resolve the problem raised, and to achieve reconciliation between you and the school. It provides an opportunity for you to explain your complaint and concerns, for the headteacher to explain the school's response, and for all people present to seek clarification through questions and discussion. Once the discussion has ended, everyone apart from the panel will leave the meeting, and the panel will review matters and reach its decision.

A written decision on the complaint will be provided to you and to the school by the panel within fifteen working days. You will also be advised of what options are open to you to appeal against the decision. Any appeal process pursued will normally involve the Local Authority, and ultimately the Secretary of State for Education. It is very rare that a complaint will need to progress to these stages.

### **Linked Policies**

Behaviour Management Policy and Guidelines

# Flowchart

## Summary of Dealing with Complaints



