



# Newall Green Primary School

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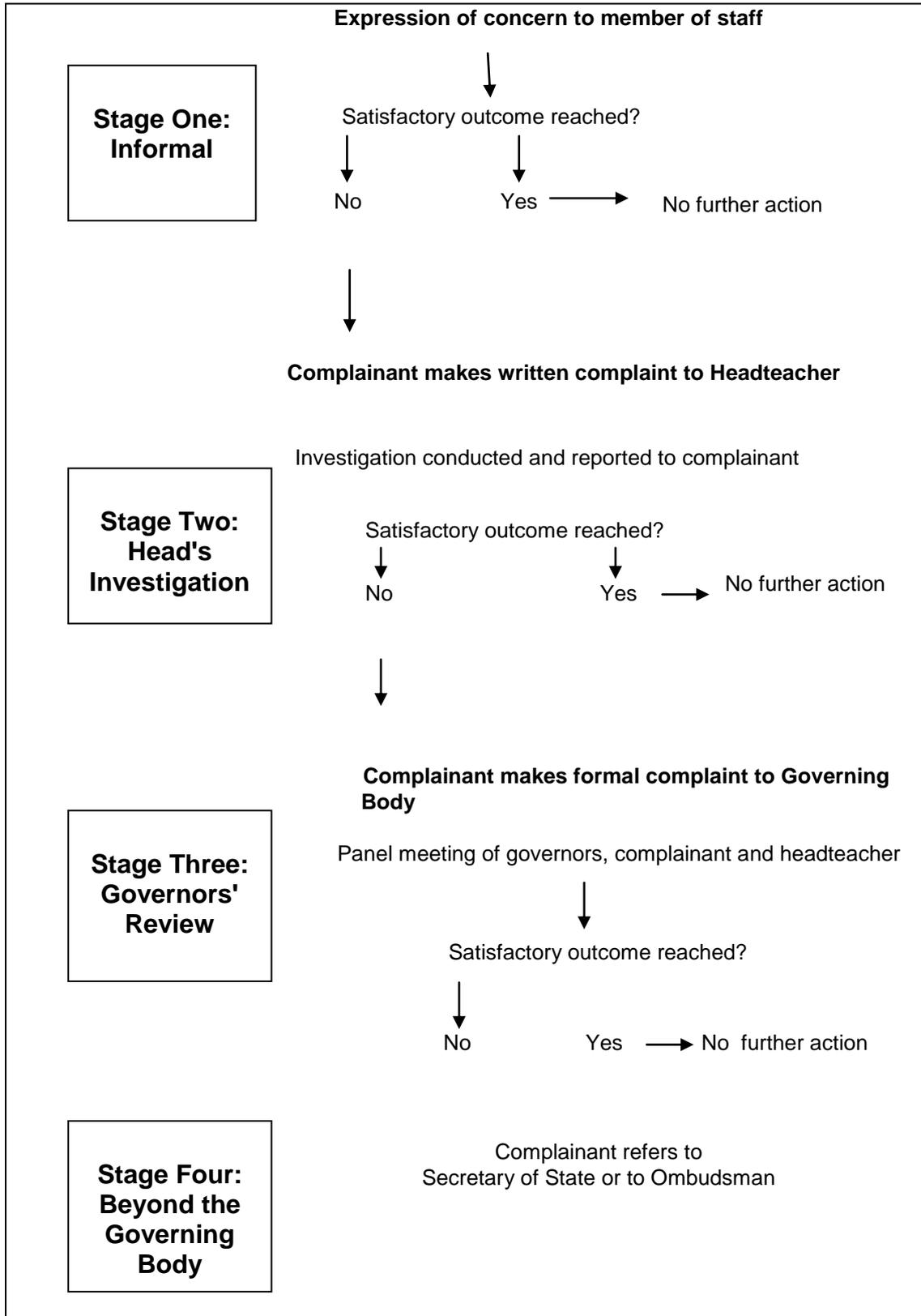
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**Newall Green Primary School Complaints Procedure**  
**Appendix A - Summary**



## **Newall Green Primary School** **Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1: Informal**

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the class teacher or school secretary or Headteacher, depending on whom the parent first approached. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality.

### **Stage 1**

1. Parents have an opportunity for discussion of their concern with the appropriate member of staff who clarifies with the parent the nature of the concern, and reassures them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter a clear note is made of the complainant's name, address/phone number together with the date.
3. Any member of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. S/he will check later to make sure that the referral has been successful.
4. Headteacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.
5. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, the parent is advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body this is Marilyn Peak.
6. The staff member dealing with the concern will make sure that the parent is clear about any action (if any) or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.
7. Where no satisfactory solution has been found within 10 days, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so they are given clear information about how to proceed and about any independent advice that may be available to them.

### **Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher (or designate) for investigation**

At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. In some cases the Headteacher has already been involved in looking at the matter; in others it is his/her first involvement.

As headteachers have responsibility for the day-to-day running of their schools, they have responsibility for the implementation of a complaints system, including the decisions about their own involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having various 'stages' in a complaints procedure is to reassure complainants that their grievance is being heard by more than one person.

## **Stage 2**

1. The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint orally or in writing within 3 working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be written within 10 working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
2. The Headteacher provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend who can speak on his or her behalf.
3. If necessary, the Headteacher should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/carers present. In some situations circumstances may prevent this. If so, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be asked to attend. If a member of staff is complained against the needs of that person should be borne in mind.
4. The Headteacher keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.
5. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher will then produce a written response to the complainant, or any wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.
6. A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of the Governing Body within five weeks of receiving the outcome letter.
7. If a complaint is against the action of a headteacher, or if the headteacher has been very closely involved at Stage 1, the chair of the governing body should carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

### **Stage 3: Review by the governing body**

Complaints only rarely reach this formal level, but it is important that the governing body is prepared to deal with them when necessary. At this stage, the school should seek advice from any relevant authority e.g. this will be One Education Manchester Schools support service.

It is important that this review is not only independent and impartial but that it is seen as being so. If an individual governor is approached with a complaint the complainant should be referred directly to the headteacher. The governor should not normally become involved in the complaints procedure. If an individual governor decides to take up a complaint on behalf of an individual or a group, s/he should not take any part in the formal hearing of the complaint.

Complaints should not be raised at full meetings of the governing body and should not be reported to the governing body until resolved by the appropriate panel and then not in detail.

Parents inevitably see many complaints as being 'against' a particular member of staff. However, complaints reaching this stage will have done so because the complainant has not been satisfied by the headteacher's response at the earlier stage of the procedure. It may be appropriate for the governing body to consider that the complaint is against the school rather than against the member of staff whose actions led to the original complaint.

### **The procedure to be used for a review by the governing body**

1. Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the procedures outlined below will be followed.
2. The clerk to the governing body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request. The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by a panel of three members of the school's governing body within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be sent to the panel members.
3. The clerk should arrange to convene a Complaints Panel elected from members of the governing body. It may be necessary for the governing body to appoint reserves to this Panel to ensure that three governors are available to carry out their task within the set time.
4. The Panel members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Governors will want to be sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. A chair should be elected.
5. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the complaint is heard by the Panel within 20 working days of receiving the letter in 3.2. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the

Panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair of the Panel should prepare a thorough summary for sending to Panel members.

6. The Chair of the Panel will write and inform the complainant, headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel at least 5 working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.
7. The Chair of the Panel should invite the headteacher to attend the Panel meeting and to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complainant. The headteacher may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. Any relevant documents including the headteacher's report should be received by all concerned - including the complainant - at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.
8. The involvement of staff other than the headteacher is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.
9. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
10. The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his/her complaint has at least been taken seriously.
11. The Panel should remember that many parents are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the Panel. It is therefore recommended that the Chair of the Panel ensures that the proceedings are as informal as possible.
12. If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.
13. The meeting should allow for:
  - the complainant to explain their complaint and the headteacher to explain the school's response;
  - the headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint;
  - the complainant to question the Headteacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response;
  - Panel members to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the headteacher;
  - either party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of the Panel) and to have the right to question witnesses;

- final statements by both the complainant and the headteacher.
14. The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the headteacher that the Panel will now consider the evidence presented, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.
  15. The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and:
    - reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
    - decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and, where appropriate;
    - recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
  16. A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and headteacher. The letter to the complainant should explain how a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.
  17. The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

#### **Stage 4: Beyond the Governing Body**

##### **4.1 BRITE Trust**

Complaints can be taken to the Board of Directors of the BRITE trust. The Directors will contact the Governing Body for more information in order to consider the complaint and to check that the systems have been adhered to.

##### **4.2 The Secretary of State**

Complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment under section 496 of the Education Act 1996 on the grounds that a Governing Body or LEA is acting or proposing to act unreasonably, or under section 497 of the same Act, on grounds that either the Governing Body or the LEA has failed to discharge its duties under the Act. The Secretary of State may contact the Governing Body or the LEA for more information in order to consider the complaint. These powers relate to both community and voluntary schools.

##### **4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman**

Complaints about the maladministration of Local Authority services including the way it operates any general school complaints procedure could be made to the Ombudsman. However the Ombudsman does not look at internal school management matters and usually expects that thorough attention has been given to a complaint locally before investigation.

## **PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINT APPEAL MEETING**

1. Chair to open meeting and explain the procedure
2. The parent will explain the events which have brought about the complaint
3. The headteacher will then be given the opportunity to question the parent
4. The panel will then be given the opportunity to question the parent
5. The headteacher will then put his/her case to the panel
6. The parent will then be given the opportunity to question the headteacher
7. The panel will then be given the opportunity to question the headteacher
8. The parent and headteacher will then be asked to sum up their respective cases
9. The headteacher and parent will be asked to withdraw
10. The panel will deliberate in private and the parties will be advised as to the timescale for a response