

Learning is fun at

Park Hill Infants' School



Concerns and Complaints Policy

Version 1.3

September 2023

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Version	Date	Notes	Changes made by
1	October 2018		
1.1	October 2020	No key changes	Jane Charman and Natasha Parry
	November 2020	Approved at FGB on 16.11.2020	
1.2	October 2022	No key changes	Natasha Parry
	November 2022	Approved at Governors meeting 14/11/22 and shared with all staff.	
1.3	September 2023	Title of policy amended. Complaints process amended to clarify difference between a 'concern' and a 'complaint.' Reflects additional input provided by Chair of Governors. Ratified at Full Governing Board meeting 13/11/2023 and shared with all staff	Natasha Parry and Jane Charman

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EQUALITIES STATEMENT

At Park Hill Infant School, we continue to teach our children about what it means to be strong, positive and productive members of society. We have always taught our pupils about equality and this remains an important part of our curriculum. We ensure that we always celebrate diversity, promote equality, demonstrate respect and stand together to challenge all forms of discriminatory language and behaviour.

We recognise that education is a vital tool for powerful, permanent and informative change. Our continuously evolving curriculum demonstrates our determination to use education to tackle issues of racism, homophobia and inequality. We strive to ensure our curriculum and supporting resources reflect values of inclusivity, diversity, equality and belonging. We do this by planning to meet the needs of all genders, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more-able, gifted and talented, of children with disabilities, of children from all socio-economic backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups, religion and cultural backgrounds, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

INTRODUCTION

Park Hill Infant School strives to provide an excellent education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases. The decision at each stage of the process is made by someone who has not been involved at an earlier stage.

If any parents/carers have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. **We stress that there is a clear difference between a concern and a complaint.** We take all concerns seriously and find that the majority of situations can be resolved by an open and honest discussion. Therefore, few develop into more formal complaints.

Park Hill Infant School defines a concern as an expression of worry, dissatisfaction, or unease related to any aspect of the school's operations, policies, practices, or the behaviour of its staff, students, or stakeholders. Concerns may arise from parents, guardians, students, staff members, or other community members and are typically expressed in a constructive manner to seek resolution and improvement.

In contrast, Park Hill Infant School defines a complaint as the formal expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made by a member of the school community, including students, parents, guardians, or staff, when they believe that their concerns have not been adequately addressed or resolved through informal means. Complaints often involve specific issues, incidents, or disputes and may trigger a structured process for resolution and investigation as outlined in this policy.

Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.

This policy is on the school's website and is also referred to in our prospectus. It covers any clear expression of dissatisfaction with the school, its personnel, or its services. Anyone may make a complaint including children, parents/carers, volunteers, paid workers, or anyone outside the school.

AIMS

Park Hill Infant School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. In the interests of fairness, the decision at each stage of the process is made by someone who has not been involved in making the decision at the end of an earlier stage.

We treat complaints seriously and give careful consideration to each one. We provide sufficient opportunity for complaints to be fully discussed in a confidential and sensitive manner. We aim to resolve any complaint at the earliest possible Stage of our procedures.

Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. We ensure the complainant is given:

- a copy of the Concerns and Complaints Policy
- information about which Stage the complaint is being dealt with
- clear information on the outcome of each Stage together with details of how to move on to the next Stage within the stated time limits if they are not satisfied.

In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else.

THE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Informal expression of concern made to the school.</p> <p>All Stage 1 concerns will be dealt with by the class teacher. A senior member of staff may be informed at this stage.</p>	<p>All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress from their own individual starting points. They naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress, and most issues can be resolved on the spot through discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a parent is concerned, they should, in the first instance, talk to the child's class teacher with the aim of resolving concerns through discussion.• If a parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the class teacher, they can make a further meeting with the year group leader.• If a parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the year group leader, then they should arrange a further meeting with one of our Assistant Headteachers
<p>Stage 2 (i)</p> <p>Expression of concern is escalated to the Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents should meet with the Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher to explain their concerns with the aim of resolving the situation through discussion

<p>Stage 2 (ii)</p> <p>Formal complaint received by the Head teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the parents feel that the situation is still not resolved, they should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher, stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen. • The Headteacher acknowledges the written complaint within 3 school days and carries out an investigation of unresolved issues OR delegates this to a senior member of staff. • The timeframe for Stage 2 is no longer than 20 school days during which an investigation is completed and the Headteacher communicates the decision/outcome in writing to the parent. This will give a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, together with the information that if they are not satisfied they can write to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days, (Stage 3). The letter should be marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the Chair of Governors at the school office. <p>If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the matter is referred directly to the school's Chair of Governors who will personally investigate the situation, provided they have had no prior involvement, or may delegate it to another governor or exceptionally to the Complaints Panel. The Chair of Governors will inform the complainant of the decision / outcome at the end of the Stage 2 investigation. This will give a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, together with information that if they are not satisfied they can write to the Governors Complaints Panel within 10 school days, requesting to take the matter to Stage 3, and stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen. The letter should be marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the school office.</p> <p>If more than 20 days is needed to complete Stage 2, the Headteacher, (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher), will notify the complainant of the reason and give a new date by which they can expect the Stage 2 decision.</p>
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Formal written appeal to the Chair of Governors (or Governors Complaints Panel) received within 10 school days of the Stage 2 decision letter</p>	<p>Within 5 school days of receipt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of letter, stating it is receiving attention. • the school will provide the letter and all background papers and policies to the Chair of Governors. <p>Within a further 5 school days the Chair of Governors will normally delegate the Stage 3 work to the governors' Complaints Panel if appropriate, and notify the parent in writing of their decision.</p>

	<p>If the complaint is referred to the Governors Complaints Panel, the Panel Chair will convene a meeting within 5 school days to consider the paperwork and decide the way forward, and will write to the complainant giving details of the outcome of that meeting.</p> <p>If a meeting with the parent and others involved is considered necessary, the parent will be given adequate notice to prepare. After the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will notify the parent of decisions made by the Panel within 7 school days.</p> <p>The Panel Chair's written notification of the school's final decision will include information that if the parent remains dissatisfied they may approach the Department for Education, (Stage 4).</p>
<p>Stage 4</p> <p>Representation to The Secretary of State for Education</p>	<p>If all previous stages have been explored and the parent is not satisfied the complainant may make further representations to the Department for Education at https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school, who may look at the matter or refer on to Ofsted or the Education Funding Agency. This would normally only be appropriate if it is believed that the school and the Governing Body have acted illegally or arbitrarily.</p> <p>The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.</p>

In the case of a vexatious complaint where despite all the school stages of the Concerns and Complaints Policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

INVESTIGATING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

It is suggested that at each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Tell the parent at what Stage of the complaints procedure the complaint is currently being dealt with
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Listen carefully to the complainant and clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Complete all necessary notes
- Ensure that the parent is aware of their right to take the matter to the next Stage of the concerns and complaints procedure within the specified time limit if they remain dissatisfied.

RESOLVING CONCERNS AND/OR COMPLAINTS

At each stage in the complaint process, schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. (Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released);
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Governing Body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher will log all stage 2 (ii) complaints received by the school on CPOMS (safeguarding record system) and record how they were resolved. These logs are presented to the Governing Body as part of the Headteacher's report.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

This policy is reviewed annually by the full Governing Body.

Signed: _____ Chair of Governors

Print Name: _____

Date: _____