

# Chew Valley School Concerns and Complaints Procedure

## **Informal Approaches:**

1. Chew Valley School takes pride in the excellent relationships which exist between pupils and teachers and between parents and the school. The school has worked hard over many years to establish a strong partnership with parents which it regards as vital for the success of pupils.
2. Inevitably, concerns can arise from time to time and the school will want to respond quickly to these. Parental concerns can be raised with individual teachers and the tutor through the mechanism of the homework diary. They can also be raised with Heads of Year, Heads of Subject or Senior Staff. Often the most effective way of doing this is by phoning the Home School Liaison Officer, Mrs Taylor (01275 332272). As a member of the non-teaching staff, she is usually available and, if she is unable to take your call, she will respond promptly to any recorded message. Parents will understand that teachers' class responsibilities limit their ability to respond speedily to a request for telephone or face to face contact.
3. Our aim is that concerns can be managed informally so that the difficulty is addressed and resolved to the parents' satisfaction, obviating the need for resort to the Complaints Procedure.

## **Making A Complaint**

4. Where a concern has been raised and the parent feels dissatisfied with the resolution offered, they have the right to make a complaint to the school.
5. Written complaints are more easily investigated because the reasons for a parent's dissatisfaction can be clearly set out. They should be addressed to the

Headteacher at the school. If the complaint is against the Headteacher, it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors.

6. The complaint will be investigated as speedily as possible and a response will be given within a maximum of five working days of receipt. In practice, most responses will be much quicker than this. In more complex cases which involve, for example, the Local Authority's procedures, this response may need to be followed up by further contact between the school and the parent making the complaint. In such cases our aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible.
7. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will aim to be impartial and non-adversarial in dealing with complaints.
8. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will respect people's desire for confidentiality except where statutory responsibilities (for example in relation to Child Protection) prevent him/her from giving such an undertaking.
9. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will aim to address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
10. Where the school has been at fault, the Headteacher will consider, with governors and staff, matters of policy which should be improved to prevent recurrence of the problem.
11. If the Headteacher has been unable to resolve the matter to the parent's satisfaction, appeal can be made to the Chair of Governors.
12. If the parent is dissatisfied with the Chair of Governors' efforts to resolve the matter, the parent may appeal to a Panel of Governors.

**Policy Adopted by Governing Body** March 2010

Review date March 2012

## **Annex A**

### **Governors' Appeal Hearing**

The governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. It is only available after a complaint made to the Chair of Governors has not been resolved to the parent's satisfaction. The complaint will be heard by a panel of three governors. They will choose their own chair.

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

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint 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.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible.
- d. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Role of the Clerk**

The Clerk to the Governors will be the contact point for the complainant. The Clerk will:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

### **The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body**

The Chair of Governors will:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel;

### **The Role of the Chair of the Panel**

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently and no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

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

The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response within five working days.

## **Annex B**

### **Checklist for a Panel Hearing**

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

## Flowchart

### Summary of Dealing with Complaints

