



COVE INFANT SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY (NON-CURRICULUM)

Rationale

This policy is intended to set out how the school will deal with general complaints. Parents and other people should feel able to express their views in the full knowledge that they will be dealt with fairly.

It is not intended to cover those aspects of school life where the law sets specific complaints procedures ie admissions, exclusions, complaints about the delivery of the National Curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education. Parents who are not satisfied with an Education Authority's decision about special needs assessments may appeal to the SEN Tribunal. Further details about these procedures are available in other documents.

Aims

- An accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints
- Encourage parents to express their views at the earliest opportunity, through the appropriate channels
- To aid communication between parents and school.

Whether a complaint is made informally or formally, all parties should ensure details are only known to those involved in investigating the complaint. Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.

Guidelines

Stage 1 : The First Contact : dealing with concerns and complaints informally

- 1.1 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, Head Teacher or Chair of Governors depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 1.2 If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, s/he makes a clear note of the date, name, contact address or phone number and the issue raised.

- 1.3 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 the referral has been successful. Complaints made informally to governors will be referred to the relevant member of staff or to the chair where appropriate.
- 1.4 On certain major issues, the Head Teacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.
- 1.5 If the complaint relates to the Head Teacher, the parent is advised to contact the Chair of Governors.
- 1.6 The person dealing with the concern makes sure that the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.
- 1.7 Where no satisfactory solution has been found parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they are given clear information, both orally and in writing, about how to make a formal complaint and about any independent advice available to them.

Stage 2 : Formal complaint to the Head Teacher

- 2.1 The Head Teacher (or designate) acknowledges 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. This should normally be within 10 working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- 2.2 The Head Teacher (or designate) provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if they wish they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.
- 2.3 If necessary, the Head Teacher (or designate) should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present. In some situations, circumstances may prevent this eg where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where particular circumstances mean that a pupil has specifically said they would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved. In such circumstances 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.
- 2.4 The Head Teacher (or designate) keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 2.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Head Teacher (or designate) should then produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly, following which the notes of the meeting should be shared and agreed.

2.6 A written response includes a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that they should notify the Chair of Governors within 5 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

2.7 If the complaint is against the action of the Head Teacher, or if the Head Teacher has been very closely involved at Stage 1, the Governors Complaints panel should carry out all the stage 2 activities.

Stage 3 : Formal complaint to governors

3.1 Upon receipt of a formal written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the procedures outlined below should be followed.

3.2 The Clerk to Governors should 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 three members of the Governing Body within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter should 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 received by the members of the panel.

3.3 The Clerk to Governors should arrange to convene a panel elected from members of the Governing Body.

3.4 The Chair/Vice chair will ensure that the complaint is heard by the panel within 20 working days of receiving the letter. 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 the panel members.

3.5 The Chair/Vice Chair will write to inform the complainant, Head Teacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel at least 5 working days in advance of the time, date, 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/advocate/interpreter. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

3.6 If either panel 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.

3.7 The meeting will allow for the complainant to explain their complaint and the Head Teacher to explain the school's response, the Head Teacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Head Teacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response. Panel members will have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties have the right to question all witnesses. Notes will be shared and agreed following the meeting.

3.8 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Head Teacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Head Teacher, other members of the staff and witnesses will then leave.

3.9 The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and (a) reach a unanimous or at least a majority decision on the complaint and (b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

3.10 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Head Teacher. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made and if so to whom.

Responsibilities

This policy is to be monitored by the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

Date proposed	:	19 July 2012
Date ratified	:	19 July 2012
Review due	:	June 2013