



# Downview Primary School

## Procedures for Dealing with School Complaints

At Downview Primary we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which children will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise, however, that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

### Introduction

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or children, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than a year it will not be investigated.

The prime aim of this policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school. Any complaints concerning the conduct of school staff will be handled in accordance with the school's internal disciplinary procedures such an investigation will remain confidential.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

### The School Policy has four main stages.

#### Stage 1 – Raising a concern

Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a staff member.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint is heard by an appropriate member of staff. The formal procedures are only invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Headteacher.

Stage 4 – Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact with the child's class teacher.

It is important for parents / carers to recognise that the school is a busy organisation and that whilst we will do our best, it may not be possible to offer an appointment immediately.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 1, please write to or call the school within ten working days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

## **Stage 2 – Complaint heard by an appropriate staff member.**

Formal complaints should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher, Mrs. M. Williams. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue, however, if the issue requires complex investigation (e.g. interviewing a number of people) it may take up to five working days. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.

This meeting will normally take place within ten working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 2 please write to or call the school within ten working days of receiving our response. You will need to tell the school why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do.

## **Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Headteacher**

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Headteacher will arrange for a further investigation. Following the investigation, the Headteacher will normally give a written response within ten school working days. If you are dissatisfied with the result at Stage 3, you will need to let the school know within ten working days of receiving the response.

## **Stage 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body’s Complaints Appeal Panel**

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair or a nominated Governor will convene a complaints appeal panel, with at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the academy.. The complainant may attend and be accompanied if they wish. The hearing will normally take place within ten working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation. The aim of the Appeal Panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. Any abusive behaviour at the hearing will not be tolerated and the Chair or nominated Governor may close the meeting in the light of any unacceptable behaviour. All parties will be notified of the Panel’s decision in writing within three working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further, although it should be noted that the decision of the Governor’s Complaints Panel is final.

As Downiew Primary School is an Academy, following the outcome of stage 4 of this procedure, complaints regarding Academies may be considered by the Education Funding agency only in specific circumstances shown next.

**The EFA can only look at complaints about academies that fall into the following two areas:-**

- a. The academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint or the academy’s complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements.**

**The EFA cannot review or overturn an academy’s decisions about complaints but will look at whether the academy considered the complaint appropriately. The EFA will generally only do this after a complaint has been through the academy’s own procedure but may investigate sooner if there is evidence of undue delays by the academy. If the EFA finds that an academy did not deal with a complaint appropriately it will request that the complaint is reconsidered. Similarly, if the academy’s complaints procedure does not meet statutory requirements then the EFA will ensure this is put right.**

- b. The academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State. One of the EFA’s main responsibilities is to ensure that academies comply with their funding agreement with the Secretary of State. The EFA will seek to resolve any concerns regarding potential or actual breaches of the funding.**

EFA will deal with complaints about academies in accordance with the following principles:

- academies should be receptive to genuine expressions of dissatisfaction, complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately; they are also resolved at the most local level possible
- In dealing with complaints the EFA will take account of its public sector equality duty (under the Equalities Act 2010)

Where possible, please put your complaint in writing. If you have difficulty in providing details in writing, EFA will discuss with you alternative ways of receiving the information.

Complaints about academies should be sent:

- via the Department for Education's schools complaints form (<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>)
- by post to Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ

## **NOTE**

Allegations of abuse against a member of the school staff must be reported to the Headteacher immediately. Allegations of abuse against the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body the member will be informed of the complaint.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

## **Review**

The Governing Body will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School