

Ash, Cartwright & Kelsey Church of England  
Primary School (Aided)

**Complaints Policy**

Lead Governor: Mrs L Porreca (Chair)  
Lead member of staff: Fiona Crascall - Head Teacher

Date approved: Feb 2017  
Review Date: Feb 2018

**We believe that our school is welcoming, safe and stimulating, promoting a love of learning and offering opportunities for all to succeed. As a Church school we see Friendship and Forgiveness, Creativity, Community, Perseverance and Happiness as being at the heart of what we do.**

## **Background**

Every school must have a procedure for handling complaints. This must be freely available to parents or others. This document set's out the school's complaints procedure which has been agreed by the Governing Body.

At Ash Cartwright & Kelsey Church of England (Aided) Primary School we aim, in accordance with the School's Christian Foundation, to provide a school that is welcoming, safe and stimulating, promoting a love of learning and offering opportunities for all to succeed. As a Church school we see friendship, happiness forgiveness, creativity, perseverance and community as being at the heart of what we do. It is in this context that we seek to promote a sense of self-worth in both children and staff within a happy, safe and secure environment. The school also seeks to ensure forgiveness and reconciliation are key elements of the process of resolution.

Complaints procedures should not be used for appeals and referrals that fall under other procedures and legislation and which are covered by other guidance, including:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs
- Staff Grievances
- Child Protection
- Whistleblowing

## **Extended Services**

It is recommended that the Governing Body ensures that any third party providers offering community services or facilities on the school premises or using the school facilities for any purpose have their own complaints procedures in place.

## **Complaints Procedure**

In order to investigate your complaint as fully as possible the Governing Body has a staged process. Most issues are sorted out informally and we would recommend that you try this approach first. However, if you feel that there is nothing to be gained and you wish to make a formal complaint you have the right to go straight to stage 1 of the complaints procedure.

Complaints Co-ordinator: The Head Teacher is the Complaints Co-ordinator.

### **Resolving concerns informally**

- 1.1. Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. Parents should be advised from the outset that there is a complaints procedure that they can use if the matter cannot be resolved. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
- 1.2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number.
- 1.3. All members 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 dealt with.
- 1.4. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Head Teacher s/he may decide to deal with the complaint. If the complaint is against the Head Teacher the parent will be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body. Contact details for the Chair of Governors can be obtained from the school office.
- 1.5. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.
- 1.6. While it is often a helpful way to resolve problems more quickly, a parent or pupil is not required to pursue informal ways to address complaints but has the right to make a formal complaint at any time.

### **Complaints Procedure Stage 1: investigation by the Head Teacher**

- 2.1 Complaints at this stage need to be recorded in writing. A complainant may wish to write in themselves. Complainants may also make their complaint verbally and can expect help to put their complaint in writing.
- 2.2 The Head Teacher (or designated person) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working term days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 working term days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised

target date. This will be within a maximum of 20 working term days unless it is a particularly complex issue.

- 2.3 The Head Teacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet them to supplement any information provided previously or to record the complaint in writing if it has been made verbally. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on his/her behalf or to provide support.
- 2.4 If necessary the Head Teacher will interview other parties and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed unless this is judged not to be in the interests of the pupil's welfare. Pupils should normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that s/he would prefer that parents/guardians were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If a member of staff is complained against, they must have the opportunity to present their case.
- 2.5 The Head Teacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 2.6 Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Head Teacher will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within 20 working term days of receiving the letter.
- 2.7 If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, or if the Head Teacher has been closely involved in the issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will carry out all the Stage 1 procedures.

## **Stage 2: Review by Chair of Governing Body**

- 3.1 Complaints at this stage need to be recorded in writing. A complainant may wish to write in themselves. Complainants may also make their complaint verbally and can expect help to put their complaint in writing.
- 3.2 The Chair of Governors (or designated person) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working term days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 working term days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date. This will be within a maximum of 20 working term days unless it is a particularly complex issue.
- 3.3 The Chair of Governors will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet them to supplement any information provided previously or to record the complaint in writing if it has been made verbally. It will be made clear to the

complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on his/her behalf or to provide support.

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- 3.5 The Chair of Governors will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 3.6 Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Chair of Governors will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within 20 working term days of receiving the letter.

### **Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body**

- 4.1 The Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the governing body to review the complaint. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that three members of the school's Governing Body will hear the complaint within 20 working term 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 three members.
- 4.2 A meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel will be convened. No governors with prior involvement in the issues complained about will be included on the panel and it may be necessary to use reserves (previously agreed by the Governing Body) to ensure the Panel can meet within the set time. Governors should bear in mind the advantages of having a parent governor on the panel, and will also be sensitive to issues of race and gender. The Head Teacher will not sit on the Panel. An experienced governor will chair the panel meeting.
- 4.3 The Chair of the panel will ensure the Panel hears the complaint within 20 working term days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence relating to the complaint will be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair may prepare a thorough summary for sending to Panel members.

- 4.4 The Chair or clerk will write and inform the complainant, Head Teacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel at least 5 working term days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification will also inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter and explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.
- 4.5 The Head Teacher will be invited to attend the Panel meeting and will be asked to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. All attendees including the complainant should receive a set of the relevant documents including the Head Teacher's report and the agenda, at least 5 working term days prior to the meeting.
- 4.6 Submission of additional documents or requests for additional attendees will be at the discretion of the Chair of the panel.
- 4.7 At the panel hearing:
- The complainant will have the opportunity to present their complaint.
  - The Head Teacher will explain the school's position.
  - Those present will have the opportunity to ask questions.
  - Panel members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant and the Head Teacher.
  - The Head Teacher will be given the opportunity to make a final statement to the panel.
  - The complainant will be given the opportunity to make a final statement to the panel.
  - The chair will ask the complainant if he or she feels they have had a fair hearing.

The Chair of the Panel has responsibility to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

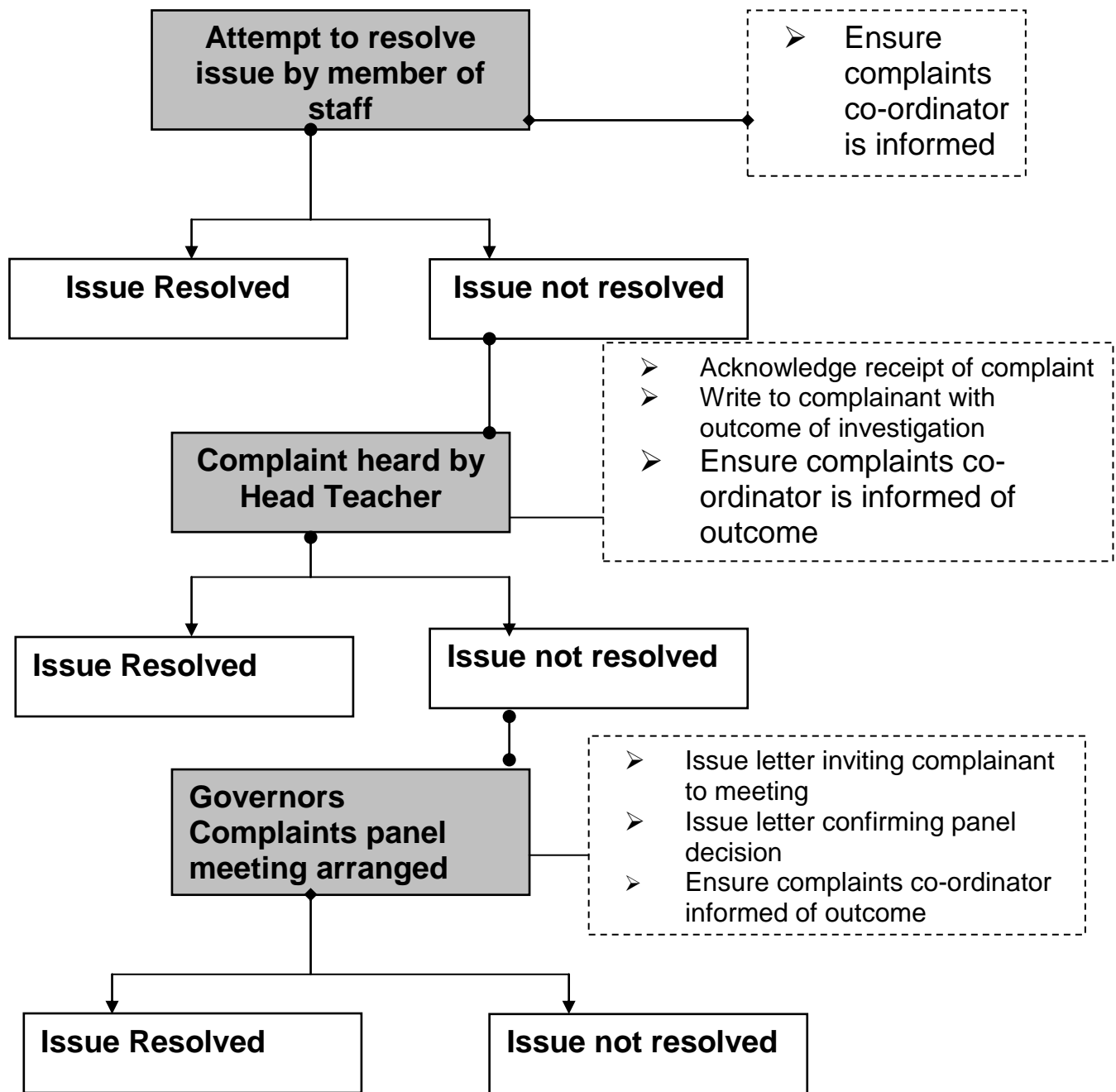
- 4.8 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and Head Teacher that the Panel will consider its decision and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working school days. The complainant, Head Teacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.
- 4.9 The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and
- Agree a decision on the complaint;
  - Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and
  - Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- 4.10 A written statement clearly setting out the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Head Teacher. The letter to the complainant should also advise how to take the complaint further.
- 4.11 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 The Secretary of State**

4.1 If a complainant wishes to go beyond the governors' complaints panel, they should be advised to contact the Secretary of State for Education. More information is available at [www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints](http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints).

**Flowchart of complaints**



**Secretary of State for Education**



## **Appendix A**

### **How to raise concerns or to make a complaint about the school**

#### **If you have a concern or complaint**

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what the problem is, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

#### **What to do first**

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the Head Teacher in the first instance you can contact him/her straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this, and can make one by ringing or calling into the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

#### **What to do next**

If you are dissatisfied with the initial response, or if you do not want to discuss the matter informally, you can make a complaint to the Head Teacher. This will need to be in writing. Contact the school office if you would like some help putting your complaint in writing.

If your complaint is about an action of the Head Teacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors now. Contact details can be obtained from the school office.

You will be offered a meeting to discuss the problem. You may bring a friend or someone else for support. The Head Teacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

**If you are still unhappy**

The problem will normally be solved at this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body to ask for a referral of your complaint to a Governors' Complaints Panel. It will then be heard by a group of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be given a fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting that the Head Teacher will also attend. The Complaints Procedure sets out in more detail how these meetings operate.

**Further Action**

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but if they remain unresolved they can be referred to the Secretary of State for Education. The Department for Education will expect the complaint to have been considered by the school governors first. There is more detail in the full Complaints Procedure, on the school's website or on the Department for Education website ([www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints](http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints)).

## Appendix B-

Your Name
Pupil's Name [if relevant]
Your relationship to the Pupil [if relevant]
Address  Postcode Daytime Tel Number  Evening Tel Number E-mail address
Please give details of your complaint here
What actions, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint. Who did you speak to and what was the response.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so please give details.

Signature:

Date:

**For Office Use only**

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: