



Thornhill Primary School COMPLAINTS POLICY

Date Issued	Autumn 2018
Governor Approval Date	Autumn 2018
Date of Next Review	Autumn 2020

Introduction

This procedure applies to general concerns or complaints that are received by Thornhill Primary School. This procedure covers complaints made by pupils, parents or other external stakeholders. There are however separate appeals procedures for a parent dissatisfied with a decision regarding either the admission or the exclusion of their child and for appeals against the grade awarded to their child in an external examination.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Thornhill will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure should be invoked through the stages outlined within the attached procedure.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). Schools must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

General Principles:

- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances
- To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the school as soon as possible. Any matter brought to the attention of the school more than 3 months after the event will not be considered.
- Investigation of any complaint or review request will begin within 5 days of receipt, except in exceptional circumstances, the investigation will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Procedure

• General Complaint	- as seen in Plan of System – General Complaints
• Complaint against a member of staff other than the Head Teacher	- Refer to Part A
• Complaint against a Head Teacher	- Refer to Part B
• Monitoring and Review	• The headteacher logs all complaints received

	<p>by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors discuss this log annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A continuous process of self-evaluation by the governors will monitor the process of dealing with complaints. • Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy.
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We believe that we can keep complaints to a minimum by forging strong positive relations with everyone connected with the school and by having in place very good lines of communication.

The school will ensure that every parent, regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, cultural background, lifestyle or religion, has equal and full rights to the school's complaints procedures and will be given whatever help is necessary to reach fair and satisfactory solutions to the issues they raise.

Part A

Complaints about the actions of a member of staff other than the Head Teacher.

1) Informal Stage

It is usual that the complainant will arrange to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, telephone, or in person, by making an appointment. Many concerns can be resolved at this stage, through clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that the vast majority of cases will be resolved at this stage. In the case of more serious concerns, it may well be wise to refer these directly to the Headteacher. If reasonable requests to find an informal resolution are declined, the process may be terminated immediately.

2) Formal Stage

If the initial complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant MUST put the complaint in writing and pass this to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for carrying out the investigation. The complaint should include details which may assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of any relevant documents (ie, previous correspondence) The Headteacher will collect other evidence if necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff, who is the subject of the complaint, they may choose to bring a representative or friend to the meeting.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant and the member of staff concerned will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by evidence
- The concern was partly or fully substantiated. Some details may then be given of action the school may be taking such as to review procedures, but details of the investigation or disciplinary procedures will not be released
- The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

The complainant will be informed that consideration of their complaint is now concluded. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, they may request that the Governing Body review the process undertaken by the Headteacher in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Headteacher, and include a specific statement detailing perceived failures to follow the procedure. The Procedure described in Part C will be followed.

If the complainant considers that the decision of the Head Teacher is incorrect, or that the Headteacher has acted unreasonably, then the complainant may bring a complaint against the Head Teacher, under Part B of this procedure. This will provide an opportunity for the evidence to support such a complaint to be investigated.

Part B – Complaining about the actions of the Head Teacher

1) Informal Stage

The complainant is usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Head Teacher, where they outline the detail of the complaint. Many concerns can be resolved through an initial meeting, where the issues are discussed and clarified. If the matter is not resolved at this initial meeting, if both parties agree, a further meeting could take place – with a third party acting as mediator if necessary. A refusal, unreasonably, to work through the process and attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated at this point.

2) Formal Stage

If the complaint cannot be resolved through the informal stage, the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of Governors, who will determine which of the arranged procedures to invoke. If it is determined that the complaint is 'General', the chair will arrange for its investigation.

The complainant should include detail which will help the investigation. In addition, the complainant may be invited to meet with the chair to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint. The chair will collect other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may well include the interviewing of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information.

The Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the chair. Once the Headteacher has had time to consider this, they will be invited to meet with the Chair of Governors in order to respond. A friend or representative may accompany the Headteacher at this meeting. When the investigation has been concluded, the complainant and the Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint is now complete. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or considers that the decision of the Chair is incorrect, or that the Chair has behaved unreasonably in considering the complaint, the complainant may request that the Governing Body review the handling of the complaint by the Chair. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Chair, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures.

Part C – Review Process

A panel of 3 members of the Governing Body shall conduct any review of the process that has been followed by the Headteacher and/or Chair. The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should also be considered. The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant. The panel will then invite the Headteacher or the Chair, as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint. The panel may also request access to records kept of the processes followed.

The complainant, and the Headteacher (or Chair) will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

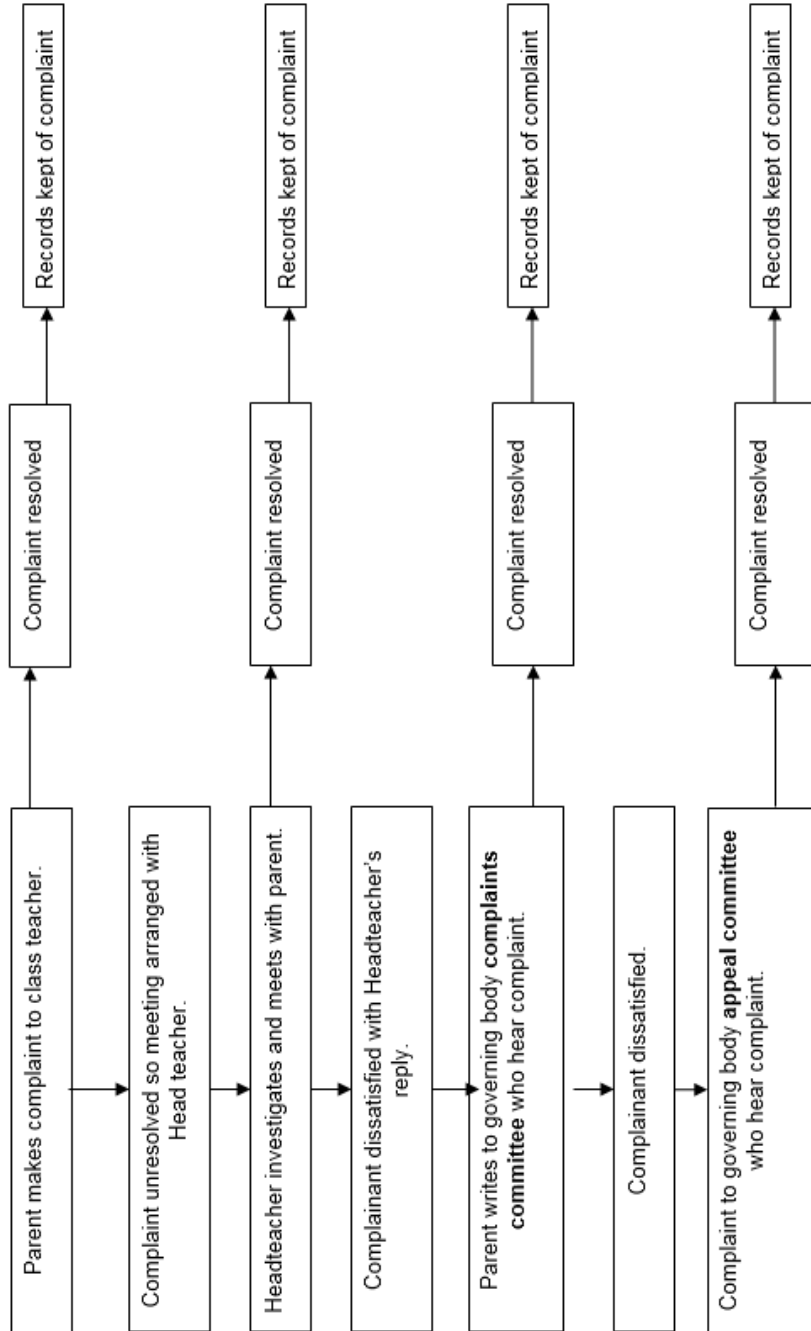
- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or full, but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly and the matter is closed.
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full and the Governing Body will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation (where practicable)

NOTES

The complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for statements that may have been provided by their child. Any information relating to application of internal processes, such as disciplinary matters, is strictly confidential. If a complainant feels that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant should make representations to the Secretary of State for Education

THORNHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

General School Complaints



If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LEA. A meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

