

# Edward Peake C of E (VC) Middle School

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## Complaints Policy

From time to time parents/carers or members of the public may have concerns about an aspect of their child's education or the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. Often those concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasions parents/carers may feel that the issue will need the school's help to be resolved.

The school wishes to work together with parents/carers towards the resolution of problems. Complaints procedures are available for inspection in the school office to show what steps may be taken.

### An informal concern

On most occasions these can be resolved immediately by speaking to the child's class teacher. It may be necessary to make an appointment at a time which is convenient to both parties.

Please let the teacher know the nature of the concern when making an appointment so that they may investigate further if necessary.

The purpose of the meeting should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern. If the meeting fails to do so then an appointment should be made to see the Year Leader or Assistant Headteacher.

They will normally make further investigations and suggest a workable solution. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, a further meeting with the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher may be requested. Please note that school staff should not discuss the implementation of disciplinary measures against other pupils.

*It is important that these procedures are followed by all parties so that a complaint can be fully investigated and resolved. Failure to follow this could jeopardise that process.*

### A formal complaint

If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage it should be put in writing and passed to the Headteacher who will either investigate the matter or delegate this responsibility to the Deputy Headteacher. If submitting a complaint in writing causes difficulties for the complainant then the complaint may be received by telephone, in person or by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant. The complaint should include details which might assist the investigation such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents. It is helpful if the complainant explains what they think might resolve the issue. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the matter. On the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation. If the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed or if the complaint is about the Headteacher then a full written complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors at the school's address. The Chair of Governors should confirm receipt of the letter within five working

days and should investigate the matter fully and reply within a further five working days. In some circumstances, the Chair may ask another governor to carry out the investigation on their behalf or may undertake a joint investigation with another Governor. If a longer period of time is required to complete an investigation the school will make contact and advise accordingly.

The Chair should collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary and may speak to other people involved or witnesses. 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 there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher to consider this he/she may meet separately with the Chair to present a response. A friend or representative may accompany the Headteacher at this meeting. On the conclusion of this meeting the complainant and Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might ensue.

This should now bring the Chair's investigation to a close. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been investigated, a request may be made for the Governing Body to hold a formal review of the process which should take the form of a hearing. Any such request should be made in writing to the Chair within two weeks of receiving notice of the outcome of the Chair's investigation and should state the reasons for the implementation of the next stage. Please note, the complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child.

#### A formal review

On receiving a formal request for the complaint to be taken to the next stage, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within five working days to inform of the date and time of the hearing and of the composition of the panel who will hear the complaint.

The hearing may take one of two forms at the discretion of the governing body. The complainant may be invited to attend the meeting, given the opportunity to inform the Governing Body of the details of the concern. The governors may ask questions to seek further clarification of the the complaint. The complainant may bring a friend to the hearing. The governors will then meet separately with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to seek their view of the issue. The Headteacher may be accompanied by a friend or representative. Once the governors have clarified any issues, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be asked to leave while they consider their response to the complaint.

Alternatively, the meeting may follow the same course described above with both parties in attendance for the duration of the hearing. In this case after both parties have stated their case and responded to questions, the complainant and the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will be requested to sum up their positions before being asked to leave. No further questioning should be allowed at this point. The governors should then consider their response.

The Governing Body will write to the complainant and the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, within forty-eight hours of the hearing with their findings. The complainant may not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might follow. However, if the investigation does result in a change to the school's policies being implemented, the complainant should be informed of the detail of this. This will bring the involvement of the Governing Body to a close and further correspondence cannot be entered into.

If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representation to the Secretary of State for Education. Where a complaint is judged by the Governing Body to be vexatious, the complainant will be informed that their

complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated - reference should be made to the Vexatious Complaints Policy.

Please note that complaints regarding the following are not included in this document:

- Admissions
- National Curriculum
- Child Protection
- School Suspensions/Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs
- Complaints about governors

Parents/Carers are advised to contact the Local Authority for further guidance on these matters.

Following Royal Assent to the Education Bill on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011, the duty to consider complaints about the curriculum has been removed from the Local Authority. Current advice from the DFE states that general complaints about schools should now be made to the Secretary of State once the school complaints procedure has been carried out.

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