



## Long Marston VA C of E Primary School School Complaints and Resolution Procedure

### Introduction

School Governors are responsible in law for having a published complaints procedure and for responding to complaints. These complaints arrangements are well-established and were made by Hertfordshire Children's Services following consultation with Headteachers, Governors, the Diocesan Authorities, Teacher Associations and Representatives of Parent Groups. For Church of England schools the Diocese of St Albans commends the adoption of this procedure.

The standard document has been amended here to make it appropriate for Long Marston VA CofE Primary School.

### What happens at the first stage?

Most concerns, complaints or potential complaints can be resolved by talking to the member of school staff concerned. The school can tell you who you should speak to first. If the concern isn't resolved by speaking to a member of staff, you should then request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days. This may include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary.

If your first contact is with an individual Governor, you are likely to be asked to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or the Headteacher.. Governors should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to investigate the complaint at either the second or third stage (but see below where the complaint is about the Headteacher).

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should contact the Chair of Governors at the school. In this case, the complaint will be referred to a Governor who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days. This may include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) you might find it helpful to talk to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at your child's school.

If parents who have not yet complained to their child's school contact the Local Authority, Council Officers will ask the complainant for their written consent to share information regarding their complaint with the school in question. If the complainant declines to provide their consent, the matter will not be taken any further. If consent is provided, the Council will pass the complainant's concerns onto the school.

## **What happens at the second stage?**

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved at the first stage, you should contact the Chair of Governors who will arrange for an investigation to be carried out by a Governor who has not yet been involved in the complaint.

This will include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary. The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

If, following the outcome of the investigation, you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 2.

## **What happens at the third stage?**

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved at the second stage, you will be asked to write formally to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- make it clear why you are complaining
- say who you have spoken to already
- explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated. This will involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1 or Stage 2, s/he will not be involved in Stage 3. The Chair of Governors will arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint will chair the Complaint Panel and may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. They will give you full details of how they will carry out any further investigation or formal hearing and keep you up-to-date with progress.

You and the school must make sure the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting.

If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named by parents in the complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, the Complaint Panel will inform you before the meeting.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of the Panel will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The Governing Body should aim to deal with complaints in this third stage within 28 school days of the letter to the Chair of Governors being received.

In all cases, the Chair of the Panel retains discretion to determine the procedures adopted.

### **Is there a further stage of complaint?**

**FOR ALMOST ALL COMPLAINTS, THE PROCEDURE ENDS WITH THE GOVERNING BODY AND THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

If the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted and you remain dissatisfied, you can approach the Secretary of State. Further advice is available from the Children's Legal Centre, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) or Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus).

**However, if your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority.**

In this case, you can write to the Complaints Manager who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and then inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. The Complaints Team will aim to investigate your complaint within 25 working days, however the investigation may take longer in complex situations. When your complaint has been fully investigated the Complaints Manager will write to let you know the decision. S/he will give the reasons for the decision, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and anyone else concerned in the investigation. Parents who remain dissatisfied following further investigation by the Local Authority have the right to complain to the Secretary of State who may decide to conduct an additional investigation.

If you wish to contact the relevant diocese, the contact details are as follows:

#### ***For Church of England schools:***

The Diocesan Director of Education, Diocesan Office, Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 1HE. Tel: 01727 818720. Email: [schools@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:schools@stalbans.anglican.org)

## Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?

**FOR ALL OTHER TYPES OF COMPLAINT, INCLUDING THOSE REGARDING BULLYING, THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM OR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN A COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY-CONTROLLED, VOLUNTARY-AIDED, FOUNDATION OR TRUST SCHOOL, THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

However, you can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education. The contact details for the Secretary of State are as follows:

The Secretary of State, Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT,  
Telephone: 0370 000 2288, Website: [www.gov.uk/contact-dfe](http://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe)

Please note that the Department for Education will only follow up your complaint with the school or the Local Authority if they believe either might have acted unreasonably or failed to carry out a statutory duty.

### Useful contact details

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| Chair of Governors                       | The school secretary can tell you who this is and pass on any written correspondence              |               |
| Complaints Team<br>(Children's Services) | Email: <a href="mailto:cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk">cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk</a> |               |
| ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)      | <a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a>  | 0300 0115 142 |
| HertsHelp                                | <a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp">www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp</a>                  | 0300 123 4044 |
| Family Lives                             | <a href="http://www.familylives.org.uk">www.familylives.org.uk</a>                                | 0808 800 2222 |
| Carers in Herts                          | <a href="http://www.carersinherts.org.uk">www.carersinherts.org.uk</a>                            | 01992 586969  |
| Children's Legal Centre                  | <a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a>                    | 01206 873820  |
| Citizen's Advice Bureau                  | <a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a>                          | 08444 111 444 |