

A Parents' Guide

1. Introduction

We believe that in the interests of all concerned, especially the child, positive relationships should be maintained. However, we appreciate that on occasions there are misunderstandings, concerns, or differences of opinion. We are always keen to rectify these at the earliest stage to prevent escalation of any concerns to complaints.

This is a **brief summary** of the schools policy so please reference the complete policy if you wish to proceed with a complaint. This brief guide is to help you with your decision.

If you wish to express your views on misunderstandings, concerns, or differences of opinion you will do one of the following:

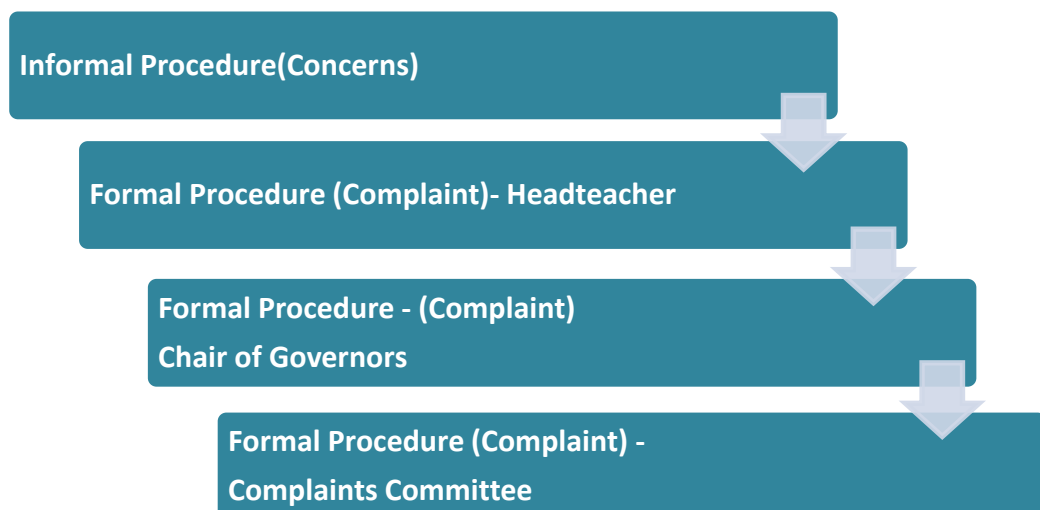
Raise concerns with the school
Raise a formal complaint

A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurance is sought.”

A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions or a lack of action.”

Usually concerns or complaints must be raised within **three months** of the incident or event to which the complaint relates (or, where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, within three months of the latest incident or event). See policy for further information.

The school has four stages to its complaints procedure. The aim is to try to deal with the concern or complaint, to the satisfaction of the complainant, at the earliest possible stage.




If the complaint cannot be resolved at the informal stage it is escalated to the formal stages. Only if the complaint cannot be subsequently resolved at the formal stages would it be escalated to a Complaints Committee meeting.

1 THE PROCESS – A SUMMARY

STAGE ONE Informal Procedure-(Concerns)

You should ask to make an appointment to meet a member of staff to discuss your concerns . In the meeting make it clear what you would like as an outcome. Should you feel that this outcome has not been achieved or are not satisfied with the response or process then you need to speak with the Headteacher about the concern , she will try to resolve this for you.



STAGE TWO Formal Procedure (Complaint)- Headteacher

If the Head teacher has listened and responded to your concern and you still feel dissatisfied you can ask the Head to begin to consider your concern more formally ,because you now wish to make a formal complaint.

The Headteacher will ask you to complete a form or she will note the details of your complaint and discuss the process of complaints with you.

The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and feed back to you on this.The aim will be to resolve the issue and ensure your satisfaction.

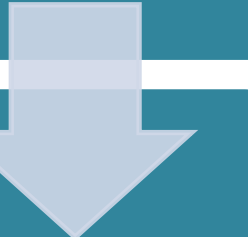
Formal notes will be kept at this stage of the process.

If you wish to move to stage 3 immediately let the headteacher know.



STAGE THREE Formal Procedure - (Complaint) Chair of Governors

If you have met the Head teacher and do not feel your complaint has been resolved you can move to the next stage of the complaints procedure where the Chair of Governors will hear and address your concerns. He/she will ensure you have completed the correct form and will then gather information from the school . Again , the purpose is to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction . If you feel that this is not the case there is one more school based stage which you can consider.



STAGE FOUR Formal Procedure (Complaint) -Complaints Committee

The complaints committee can be convened to hear your complaint. This is a much more formal process where the complaint is heard by a group of impartial governors who have no prior knowledge of your concern or complaint .Witnesses can be called to give their evidence (related to the complaint.)They will consider whether the complaints procedure has been adhered to if you have concerns in relation to this. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure in school .

2 What can you expect to happen?

The person investigating the concern or complaint will ask you:

- If you have read the full Complaints Policy to familiarise yourself with the procedure;
- If you are aware of the time limits that apply to the relevant stage;
- What the nature of the concern or complaint is and what issues remain unresolved;
- They will then establish what you say has happened, who has been involved, and what you feel would put things right;
- The investigator will then interview those concerned. They will keep a written record and establish relevant facts, on a balance of probabilities, based on evidence not speculation.
- They will provide an effective response addressing all issues raised and ensure that the response to the complaint includes the appropriate redress, where necessary;
- They will consider the outcome of the complaint so that services can be improved;
- This person will deal with investigation in an impartial, objective, fair and timely manner, keeping in mind the privacy of the parties involved.

Please consider how the complaint may be resolved. Options are:

- An explanation;
- An apology;
- Reassurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of events which led to the complaint;
- Reassurance that the school will undertake a review of its policies and procedures in light of the complaint.

Note: None of the above will constitute an admission of negligence or an acceptance of liability on behalf of the school.

John Wilkinson Schools Complaints Procedure explains what will happen at each stage in depth so we ask that you read this carefully.

3 Administrative Matters

Records

The school will keep records confidential in line with the information commissioner's advice. You must ensure you are aware of who is handling your data and how it is stored so please ensure you ask at each stage of the process and are satisfied of the arrangements.

Confidentiality

The school will keep all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body authorised to conduct a school inspection requests access to them. The outcome of all concerns and complaints, whether dealt with formally or informally, will be recorded centrally by the school.

Publication

This Complaints Policy will be reviewed annually and published on the school's web site, as well as being made available to pupils, parents and other individuals or organisations on request.

4 Unreasonable Behaviours

John Wilkinson Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

There are instances when a complaint may be regarded as unreasonable – see policy for details.

5 If you are still dissatisfied

If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene **where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably** and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to LA maintained schools in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether statutory policies adhere to education legislation. However, the SCU will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

The SCU **will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably**. If the SCU finds that the school has not handled a complaint in accordance with its procedure, we may request that the complaint is looked at again. If legislative or policy breaches are found, the SCU will report them to the school and the complainant, and where necessary, ask for corrective action to be taken. The SCU normally also seeks written assurances as to future conduct. Failure to carry out remedial actions or provide written assurances could ultimately result in a formal Direction being issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with her powers under sections 496 and 497 of the Education Act 1996.

Schools may wish to contact the SCU for advice on whether they have acted reasonably; for example: in closing down a complaint from a serial complainant before the local procedure has been completed. However, the SCU will not be able to advise on how to resolve the complaint.

Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to:

Department for Education School Complaints Unit 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

Annex 4 – Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the School who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who have you spoken to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: