



Grove School

## Complaints and Parent Partnership policy

September 2017

Mission statement  
"Enjoy, learn, achieve"

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**Grove School**

**Complaints and Parent Partnership Policy**

**2017**

## Policy on Parent Partnership at Grove School

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Reference: Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures January 2016, DFE

## **A Aims of the policy**

- To provide clear information about school related matters and procedures for all parents; and
- To ensure parents are aware of the systems available for dealing with concerns and complaints.

## **B Our Expectations**

### The Grove Expectations

At Grove School we:

- are good listeners and thoughtful speakers;
- are honest and tell the truth;
- are kind and don't hurt others or their feelings;
- respect all property;
- are supportive of others;
- always do our best.

We treat others as we would like to be treated

These expectations form the foundation of all we endeavour to do at Grove.

## **C Admitting pupils to Grove**

Information about school admissions can be found on the school website under parents/school policies/ admission arrangements.

## **D Attendance and Punctuality**

Attending school every day and arriving on time are crucial to each child feeling part of the school and providing them with the opportunity to reach their potential.

We have procedures in place to monitor attendance and punctuality, and where a situation is deemed to be a concern we can offer support. The school policy for attendance and punctuality can be found on the school website under parents/ school policies.

## **E What information will I receive about my child?**

Information about the curriculum for each year group, events for pupils and educational visits can be found on the school website:  
[www.grove.bham.sch.uk](http://www.grove.bham.sch.uk).

All children have speaking and listening, maths, reading and writing targets. Teaching staff update these on a regular basis using evidence of pupil attainment from ongoing class work and assessment and these are shared with parents at parents evenings.

Teaching staff write a detailed report on your child's social and academic progress. Parents receive their child's report at the end of the summer term at a parental consultation.

Staff at Grove continually assess and maintain records of pupil progress.

Informal day to day exchanges of information regarding your child's progress can be made with your child's class teacher at the end of the school day. If you need to discuss matters or concerns in detail

please contact the school receptionist after 8-55am to make an appointment to see your child's class teacher. Teaching staff are not available for meetings with parents before school starts. If a parent needs to discuss or convey important information this can be done through the administrative staff.

Parents receive a report, each half term, on their child's attitude towards and standard of homework completed. We value parental feedback on these reports. In July we report on homework in each child's end of year report.

#### **E How can I help my child at home?**

Set aside some time each day to discuss events at school with your child. Support your child with any work sent home. This may range from sharing a book, recognising key words to completing tasks set in homework books. Praise your child for their successes and achievements. Share their success when they have received rewards in school e.g. Star of the Week, certificates for sporting events.

Support your child in taking part in holiday projects.

#### **F How can I support the behaviour policy at Grove?**

Parents are invaluable in helping us achieve our expectations in behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

At Grove we encourage a calm and reasoned approach to behavioural issues and concerns. We encourage children to find positive ways to solve their problems and to share and discuss different strategies they can use to help them.

All staff, visitors and parents at Grove are responsible for the modelling of appropriate behaviour.

If we do have concerns about your child's attitude to their work, their conduct or behaviour or their relationship with adults or children we would contact you to come in and discuss the matter with us. The discussion will take place in private and will be with the class teacher in the first instance at a mutually convenient time. The teacher may discuss

the sanctions put in place to address the behaviour, for example, missing some or all of a playtime and/or lunchtime.

The class teacher may suggest your child would benefit from the support of a short-term behaviour target card where a target to improve attitude or behaviour is established and pupils work towards the target. It is monitored by the class teacher on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Target cards are reviewed at the end of each week.

Parents can support this process by discussing the issues with the class teacher and attending weekly review meetings to discuss progress.

If the progress of your child is limited then the target will be reviewed and Year Group Leaders and Senior teachers may become involved.

Parents will be informed when their child moves onto a different target card or when pupils are taken off their target cards.

Target cards are colour coded according to the level of support involved:

- \* Yellow - Class teacher
- \* Green - Year Group Leader
- \* Purple - Senior teacher

If a child is not seen to be making any progress on a target card then the SENCO will become involved and children may, at this point, be placed on a separate Behaviour Programme with our Behaviour Support Manager and referred to outside agencies. Parental consent will always be sought in these cases.

Attending review meetings, open discussion and supporting school sanctions will improve your child's chance of succeeding.

Parents and school working in partnership is vital to pupil success.

The school behaviour policy is available on the school website/parents/school policies.

## **G How can I get involved in school life?**

Grove offers a vast wealth of experiences for our pupils and parents. We find that parental enthusiasm for school events results in a positive attitude from our pupils.

These are some of the opportunities available for parents:

Parent's evenings, three times a year

Special Educational Needs Support review meetings held each term

Induction meetings for parents and pupils in nursery and reception

Stay and play sessions for Foundation Stage children and parents

Pupil centred reviews

Inspire workshops

Secondary transfer meetings

Celebration of religious festivals through special assemblies and parties

Helping on school educational visits by accompanying your child ( EYFS)

Meetings for parents to share information about residential and educational visits

Supporting your child with holiday projects and homework.

## **H The difference between 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'.

Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures January 2016, DFE

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. Schools should 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 their 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.

## **I When and how should I discuss my concern?**

If you have a general concern about your child's academic progress or their pastoral well being please contact the school reception after 8-55am to arrange a meeting to speak to your child's teacher. An appointment to discuss matters can then be arranged for a mutually convenient time. If you feel a concern has not been resolved please contact school to arrange an appointment with the Year Group Leader.

Occasionally parents feel a matter has not been fully resolved and in this instance you may feel it is appropriate to contact your child's Assistant Head teacher.

Assistant Head teachers:

EYFS - Mrs E Gallagher

KS 1 - Miss A Bains

Upper KS 2 - Miss I Hines and Mrs J Basnett

If a concern is not resolved parents should contact school to make an appointment to discuss their concerns with:

Ms J Baker (Deputy Headteacher), Miss E Mills (Deputy Head teacher).

Contact by letter, telephone or by speaking to the school receptionist to arrange an appointment is appropriate for all of the above. It is important to be clear about what your concern is when speaking to administrative staff to make an appointment to see senior leaders.

At Grove we always take time to look into matters in detail.

A review meeting will be arranged to ensure you have the opportunity to talk to staff about whether your initial concern has been dealt with.

### **And when you are pleased?**

A comment, letter or personal acknowledgement of all the very positive things happening in school would be very welcome. This proves to be a huge moral booster for pupils and staff.

We hope you find this document of use and will use it to help us further develop Grove as a centre of excellence in all we do.

**Grove School**

## **Dealing with a complaint procedure.**

The governing body has adopted Birmingham City Council's ' Dealing with Complaints' procedures and guidance for schools ( April 2013). These procedures deal with all concerns or complaints relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect individual pupils.

See Appendix A Birmingham City Council ' Dealing with Complaints' April 2013.

**A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action.**

**If you have a complaint the following procedures should be followed. These are Birmingham City Council procedures for schools.**

# Birmingham City Council

## Dealing with Complaints

### Procedure and Guidance Notes for Schools.

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## Overview and Scope

1. From 1 September 2003 Governing Bodies (GBs) of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England were required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.
2. This procedure is to deal with all concerns or complaints relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect individual pupils, **except** matters directly related to curriculum, or to a particular exclusion, child protection, special needs statementing or admission issue, all of which are dealt with under separate procedures; details of these procedures should also be available from the school.
3. Similarly, any complaints by members of staff should usually be dealt with through the appropriate separate procedures such as grievance, capability or anti-harassment.

## Part 1: General Principles of complaints

### Dealing with Complaints - Initial concerns/informal procedures

4. These procedures make a distinction between dealing with a concern or complaint informally or formally.
5. The underlying principle of the procedure is that, if at all possible, concerns and complaints ought to be handled and resolved informally (usually by the staff directly concerned) without the need to invoke a formal referral and process.  
It is expected that the class teacher will be able to resolve most concerns without the need to go any further.
6. An unreasonable refusal by the complainant to attempt an informal resolution may result in the concern or complaint being taken no further.

### **Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures**

7. The formal Complaint Procedure will need to be invoked when initial or informal attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern or complaint remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.
8. There are four stages to the Complaints Procedure:
  - Stage one: receiving a complaint
  - Stage two: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint)
  - Stage three: complaint heard by head teacher
  - Stage four: complaint heard by the Governing Body's complaints panel

### **Framework of Principles**

9. Any concern or complaint should be brought to the attention of the school at the earliest opportunity. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the event will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
10. A concern or complaint from a member of the public who is not a parent or a guardian of a child attending the school should be referred directly to the head teacher, unless the complaint is about the head teacher in which case it should be referred to the Chair of Governors.
11. An anonymous complaint cannot be dealt with unless there are exceptional circumstances.
12. Any concern or complaint will be dealt with in a way that:

- respects confidentiality
  - addresses all the points at issue
  - provides an effective response, and, *where necessary*,
  - appropriate redress
13. Concerns and complaints should be handled in both an impartial and non-adversarial manner, and an open, transparent and constructive way.

## Investigating Complaints

14. At whatever stage, the person investigating the concern or complaint should:
  1. establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
  2. clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
  3. clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
  4. interview those involved in the matter and / or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
15. Any person interviewed as part of an investigation is entitled to be accompanied by a friend or representative and / or a translator, and to agree any notes taken, particularly if the investigation is part of the formal process.

## Resolving Complaints

16. At whatever stage, the person dealing with the concern or complaint should endeavour to find a resolution, but obviously this will depend on the nature of the concern or complaint and what the complainant wants.
17. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.
18. Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage - though this should be on the understanding that it may not be possible or reasonable to deliver them.
19. It may be appropriate and sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part - an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.
20. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:



- an expression of regret for any distress, etc.
  - an explanation;
  - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
  - an assurance that every effort will be made to ensure that the event complained of will not recur;
  - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to try to ensure that it will not happen again;
  - an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
21. Use of the formal procedures means that all attempts at an informal resolution of the concern have failed; resolution will then depend upon any recommendations based on the judgements made from the evidence uncovered in the investigation.
22. Of course, an investigation may find no evidence for the complaint or that the complaint is otherwise groundless.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

23. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
24. The complainant may take their complaint to the LEA or to the appropriate Diocesan body, **but**, there is no onus on either of these bodies to re-open an investigation, etc. if they are satisfied that the school has dealt with the complaint appropriately; their remit is to review due process.

### **Time-Limits**

25. A concern or complaint will be acknowledged as soon as it is received and attempts to deal with it informally started as soon as practicable in timescales agreed by all parties. (It is recommended that, if at all possible, this starts within 5 working days of receiving the concern or complaint and is completed within 10 working days of starting.)

26. Once a complaint has been lodged formally, an investigation should begin within 5 working school days and a realistic but reasonable timescale should be set for completion, etc. It is reasonable for a complainant to expect to receive verbal or written feedback within 10 working school days of an investigation completing.
27. However, where further investigations become necessary or delays occur, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

## Part 2: The Complaints Procedure

### Stage one: receiving a complaint

28. A complaint from a member of the public, who is not a parent or guardian of a child attending the school, should go directly to the headteacher in the first instance. Parents, carers or guardians wishing should, where possible, contact the member of staff concerned (which may be the headteacher) - by letter, telephone or in person.
29. Whoever receives the complaint should direct the complainant to the member of staff concerned, or to the headteacher:
  - if the complainant wants an acknowledgement of the issue, and / or a resolution to a problem which is relatively straightforward, and / or the prevention of a recurrence, this is more likely to be suited by an informal process;
  - on the other hand, a formal process is required if the nature of the complaint is such that it requires (1) an investigation - rather than, or following, the appropriate person just "making enquiries about" or "looking into" an issue or the complaint - or (2), for the matter to be seen and recorded to have been dealt with.
30. **A complaint should be acknowledged as soon as it is received.**
31. If any member of staff receives a complaint, they should not attempt to deal with the issue but should pass it to the appropriate person. Similarly, if a member of staff feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the matter should be referred to a more appropriate member of staff.
32. Also, there will be occasions when the complainant may have concerns about discussing their complaint with a particular member of staff, if so, the complainant should be directed to address their concerns to the headteacher or a designated senior teacher.
33. Please note: if the first approach is made direct to a governor they should direct the complainant to the appropriate person - usually the class teacher. Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the procedure - such action may compromise future action regarding the complaint.

### **Stage two: complaint dealt with by staff member**

34. The class teacher or appropriate member of staff or headteacher will attempt to resolve the complaint using whatever reasonable means are appropriate. This will usually involve meeting the complainant to discuss the matter further, and may also involve talking to pupils, other staff members or consulting senior staff including the headteacher.
35. If having raised their concerns with the class teacher or appropriate member of staff, the complainant is still dissatisfied, or if the class teacher or other nominated member of staff is the subject of the complaint, then the complainant should contact the headteacher (unless the headteacher is the subject of the complaint - then the complainant should contact the Chair of Governors).

### **Stage three: complaint dealt with by headteacher**

36. The headteacher will attempt to resolve a complaint using whatever reasonable means are appropriate. This may involve meeting the complainant to discuss the matter further; it may also involve the headteacher interviewing staff members.
37. The headteacher must be allowed reasonable time to investigate the complaint and gather any information that is required. On this basis, the headteacher should aim to be able to give either verbal or written feedback to the complainant no later than 10 school days after receipt of the complaint.
38. On some occasions the headteacher may delegate the investigation to a senior member of staff, usually a deputy or assistant head teacher who has had no involvement with the case: the decision on the appropriate person rests with the headteacher.
39. If having raised concerns with the headteacher, the complainant is still dissatisfied, or if the headteacher is the subject of the complaint, then the complainant should contact the Chair of Governors.

### **Stage four: complaint dealt with by governing body**

40. The Governing Body has responsibility for ensuring that any formal complaints are dealt with: **complaints must be in writing** - using a specific form if required.
41. In cases that require urgent consideration the Chair may deal with the matter exclusively and without delay.

42. Otherwise, the Chair of Governors should decide if a reasonable attempt has been made by the headteacher or other staff to address the concern or complaint. It is important that concerns or complaints are dealt with appropriately as well as properly, and that staff are not subjected to "double jeopardy".
43. The Chair of Governors may refer to School and Governing Body Support or the appropriate Diocesan Office for advice and guidance in deciding, and these agencies may deal with the concern or complaint if the nature of it requires this.
44. If the Chair of Governors decides that the concern or complaint has been dealt with reasonably, then the complainant should be told that, **and** that their only grounds for appeal may be on the basis of the way in which their concern or complaint was handled (and not against the decision made).
45. If the Chair of Governors decides that the concern or complaint may not have been dealt with reasonably, or that a formal appeal is appropriate, then a hearing by a Complaint Panel of the Governing Body should be arranged.
46. The Chair will ensure that a designated panel of three or five governors will be convened to hear the complaint.
47. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole GB at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
48. The designated governors will deal with the complaint on an impartial basis via a **panel hearing** - please refer to **Notes for Guidance**
49. It is important that any hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so: no governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
50. Also, in deciding the make-up of the panel, governors should try to ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and, as far as is practicable, sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
51. The clerk to the Governing Body will normally record the proceedings.

52. The aim of the hearing, which must be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
53. The panel will:
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part, or
  - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or
  - Where appropriate decide action to be taken to uphold the complaint, or
  - Recommend changes to the school systems or procedures to seek to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
54. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour, and therefore it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
55. Following the hearing, the complainant will receive written feedback from the clerk including any decisions, recommendations and the reasons for them and, if appropriate, the next steps. The written feedback should be issued within ten working days after the investigation has concluded.
56. If the outcome might lead to action under another procedure, e.g. disciplinary, then the complainant need only be told that appropriate action will be taken.
57. Further, there may be occasions when a panel would wish to resolve an issue by means which are clearly within the responsibility of the internal management of the school: governors (and headteachers) need to be mindful of their roles and responsibilities in regulation - see *Guide to the law for School Governors*.
58. Only in exceptional circumstances should governors consider taking a decision that may undermine the authority of a headteacher or other staff and governors must consult School and Governor Support before doing so.
59. This is the final step of the process for the school (though the recommendations may be such, eg: changes in policy or practice, that it is

necessary for the full Governing Body to receive a short report regarding the findings of the investigation. (Please note: this should not mention names).

60. The Chair of Governors is responsible for ensuring that the correct procedures have been followed.
61. Of course, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed but that the complainant may take their complaint to the LEA or to the appropriate Diocesan body. Their remit is to review due process, so there is no onus on them to reopen an investigation: they may only decide to do so if they judge that there has not been due process.

## Part 3: Notes for Guidance

### The Complaints Panel Hearing

62. The hearing should be as informal as possible - many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting and parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child: the proceedings should be as welcoming as possible and the layout of the room should try to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial, so as to set the appropriate tone.
63. Any parties being heard may be accompanied by a person of their choice - a friend or representative, and/or a translator - and notes taken should be agreed by attendees.
64. Governors on the panel should make themselves familiar with these procedures before any hearing
65. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
66. Before the hearing starts, the panel should agree which one of them will chair the hearing
67. It will not usually be appropriate for the hearing to consider any issues or material which is introduced at the hearing for the first time. The Chair must insist that this is addressed outside this meeting (but through the use of this guidance as appropriate).
68. The hearing should follow any agreed meetings protocols, and proceedings should be as follows:
  - 1 After introductions, the complainant should be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
  - 2 The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
  - 3 The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
  - 4 The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
  - 5 Up to this point, the panel may ask questions at any time.



- 6 The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
  - 7 The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
  - 8 Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
  - 9 The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.
69. It is recommended that any panel or group of three governors considering complaints be clerked. **The clerk** would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:
- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
  - collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
  - meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
  - record the proceedings;
  - notify all parties of the panel's decision.
70. The **Chair of the Panel** has a key role, ensuring that:
- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
  - the issues are addressed;
  - key findings of fact are made;
  - parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
  - the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
  - the panel is open minded and acting independently

- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.
- the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response and what further steps may be planned or available; this is usually within the agreed deadline.

### **Adopting and Publicising the Procedures**

71. The Governing Body should formally accept and adopt these procedures at a meeting.
72. The procedures should then be made available to all staff through the agreed mechanisms, e.g. staff notice boards, as well as on request.
73. Parents and guardians, etc. should be notified that the school has procedures and that these are available on request, but the school should also have available an "easy-to-read" guide.

**Outline School Complaints Procedure: flowchart**

	Complaint raised and received and passed to appropriate member of staff = headteacher, if complaint from anyone other than a parent or carer)
	Complaint heard by staff member (informally and as soon as possible)
Issue resolved: (including no further action)	Issue not resolved
	Complaint heard by headteacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge receipt of complaint</li> <li>• Meet with complainant to clarify complaint</li> <li>• Look into complaint as soon as possible</li> <li>• Inform complainant of outcome (+ write to confirm)</li> </ul>
Issue resolved: (including no further action)	Issue not resolved
	Complaint referred to Chair of Governors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor's complaints panel arranged</li> <li>• Issue letter inviting complainant to meeting</li> </ul>
	Panel meet: decide to dismiss / uphold / decide action / recommend change and issue letter confirming panel decision <b>*END OF PROCESS FOR SCHOOL*</b>
	Complainant may complain to the LEA or appropriate Diocesan body who may review due process

**Example of a form to record a formal complaint**

Please complete and return to .....(Chair of Governors) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:			
Pupil's name:			
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. (Who did you speak 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:

Complaint referred to:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Date: