



# Hordle Primary School

## GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

### **Underlying principles:**

- To prevent concerns from developing into major complaints or litigation
- To strengthen parents' confidence
- To strengthen relationships between parents, school and the community
- To recognise that things can go wrong and that the school is committed to resolving concerns as quickly and effectively as possible

### **Aims:**

- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- To be speedy, with well defined timescales and named contacts
- To focus on resolution and service review rather than blame
- To promote confidentiality and discretion
- To include fair and transparent investigative processes for staff as well as complainants
- To indicate other sources of advice where appropriate
- To be forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive, malicious and anonymous complainants

## **The staged approach for dealing with complaints:**

### The Preliminary Stage

Should a parent have a complaint they should, at the earliest opportunity, speak informally to their child's class teacher.

Should the complaint be regarding the Headteacher then parents should seek to meet with the Headteacher for preliminary discussions.

If the complaint concerns an member of the Governing Body, then the mater will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

We anticipate that the majority of concerns will achieve a satisfactory resolution at this informal stage.

However, should all parties not be satisfied with the outcome of this meeting then parents will be informed of the next stage of the process.

### Stage 1

Parents will be advised to write to the Headteacher, giving details of the concern and enclosing any appropriate paperwork

The Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher, will respond to the parent in writing, or by phone, as soon as possible.

We will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response within five days. The response may take the form of an invitation to a meeting or a letter.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a response will take longer than usual. In any case the investigation and response preparation will normally take place within 20 days.

The Headteacher will follow up any meeting with parents by summarising the main points in a letter. This may prevent any misunderstanding and ensure that all parties have a clear record of progress or agreements.

If a parent remains dissatisfied, the Headteacher will decide when to give a final response and refer the parent to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

### Stage 2

Parents will be advised to write to the Chair of Governors outlining their complaint and explaining the reasons for pursuing it beyond the headteacher's response and enclosing any relevant paperwork.

Should parents need support in making a written complaint, they will be offered the option of dictating their complaint to a member of the office staff.

The Chair will aim to acknowledge the complaint or offer a full response within five days.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Chair will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual. Normally practice is to investigate the complaint and prepare a response within 20 days.

This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties.

The Chair will decide who is responsible for dealing with the issues involved and therefore what powers are available to governors with respect to the particular complaint.

If the matter relates to delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the governing body, the Chair may look at the whole issue afresh.

If the matter relates to the Headteachers' conduct, the Chair will decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the complaints procedure or staff disciplinary procedure. Advice can be sought from the LEA complaints adviser or education personnel services.

If the matter relates to an issue which is the Headteacher's responsibility, the Chair is only empowered to look at whether the Headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.

If a parent is unhappy with the outcome the Chair of Governors may offer a right of appeal to the Governing Body's complaints panel.

### Stage 3

Parents who wish to appeal to the Governors will be advised to request this in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Parents should describe the issues in detail and say why they are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the previous stages.

The powers available to the Governors remain the same as those outlined within Stage 2.

The Governors Complaints Panel will follow procedure and advice as outlined in 'Developing a general complaints procedure' (November 2002).

If a parent is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal the only recourse is to the Secretary of State, although it may be helpful to advise parents to seek advice from the LEA's complaints adviser.

Stage 4

The LEA offers a further right of appeal for parents if the complaint is about:

- The National Curriculum and related matters
- Provision of collective worship and religious education

The Secretary of State will contact the Governing Body and LEA for more information. The Secretary of State has the power to direct the school to revise an action using the same criteria as applied by the governors.

In dealing with vexatious, abusive and anonymous complaints the school will follow advice as outlined in 'Developing a general complaints procedure' November 2002.

Policy Agreed on:.....

Policy Reviewed on:.....

Signed:

Chair of Governors:.....

Headteacher:.....