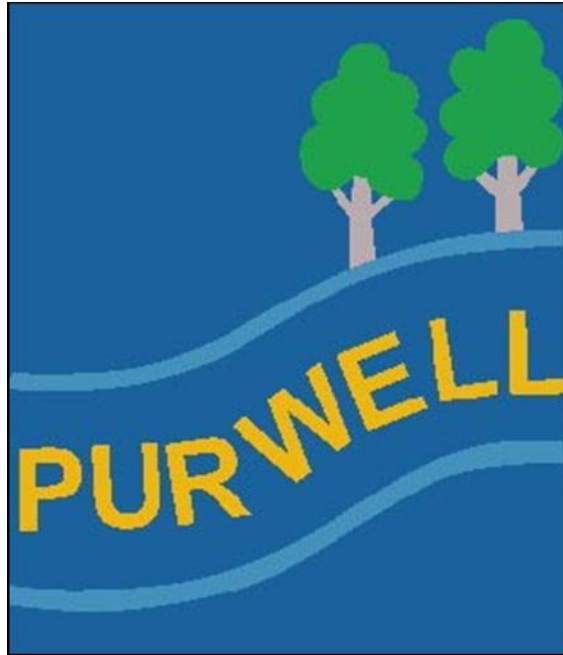


Purwell Primary School



Complaints Procedure

2017

Approved by the Governing Body, for immediate implementation, on 22nd May 2017.
For review – May 2019

How to complain to your child's school - information for parents

1. 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 following consultation with Headteachers, Governors, the Diocesan Authorities, Teacher Associations and Representatives of Parent Groups.

2. What happens at the first stage?

2.1 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 you are not satisfied, please follow the process laid out in this policy. You may wish to request a copy of the school's complaints procedure, available from the school office or website. 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.

2.2 If your first contact is with individual Governors, you may be asked to take up your concerns with the Headteacher or the appropriate member of staff. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a panel in the event of a formal hearing (2nd stage) and should be impartial.

2.3 If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors at the school. If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP,) you might find it helpful to talk to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at your child's school, or your named Special Needs Officer if your child has a Statement. A Parent Partnership Supporter may also be able to help you.

2.4 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.

3. What happens at the second stage?

- The school may ask you to complete a form or write a letter addressed 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.

3.1 The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to 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, s/he will arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. The meeting will be formally minuted. The Governing Body should give you full details of how they will carry out any further investigation or formal hearing and keep you up-to-date with progress.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 school will inform you before the meeting.

3.4 When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The Governing Body will aim to deal with complaints within 28 school days.

4. Is there a third stage of complaint?

4.1 For almost all complaints, the procedure ends with the governing body and there is no third stage of complaint to the local authority

4.2 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).

4.3 However, if your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan, you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority.

4.4 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.

5. Serial and Persistent Complainants

5.1 Purwell Primary School reserves the right to refuse to investigate a complaint if it is reasonable to regard the complaint as vexatious and/or repeated.

5.2 Where the school decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated, the complainant will receive written notification, within five school days, that the complaint is not being investigated.

5.3 If the complainant is unhappy with a decision not to investigate, or believes that the school is being unlawful in its actions, they may refer the complaint to the Secretary of State.

6. Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?

6.1 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

6.1 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:

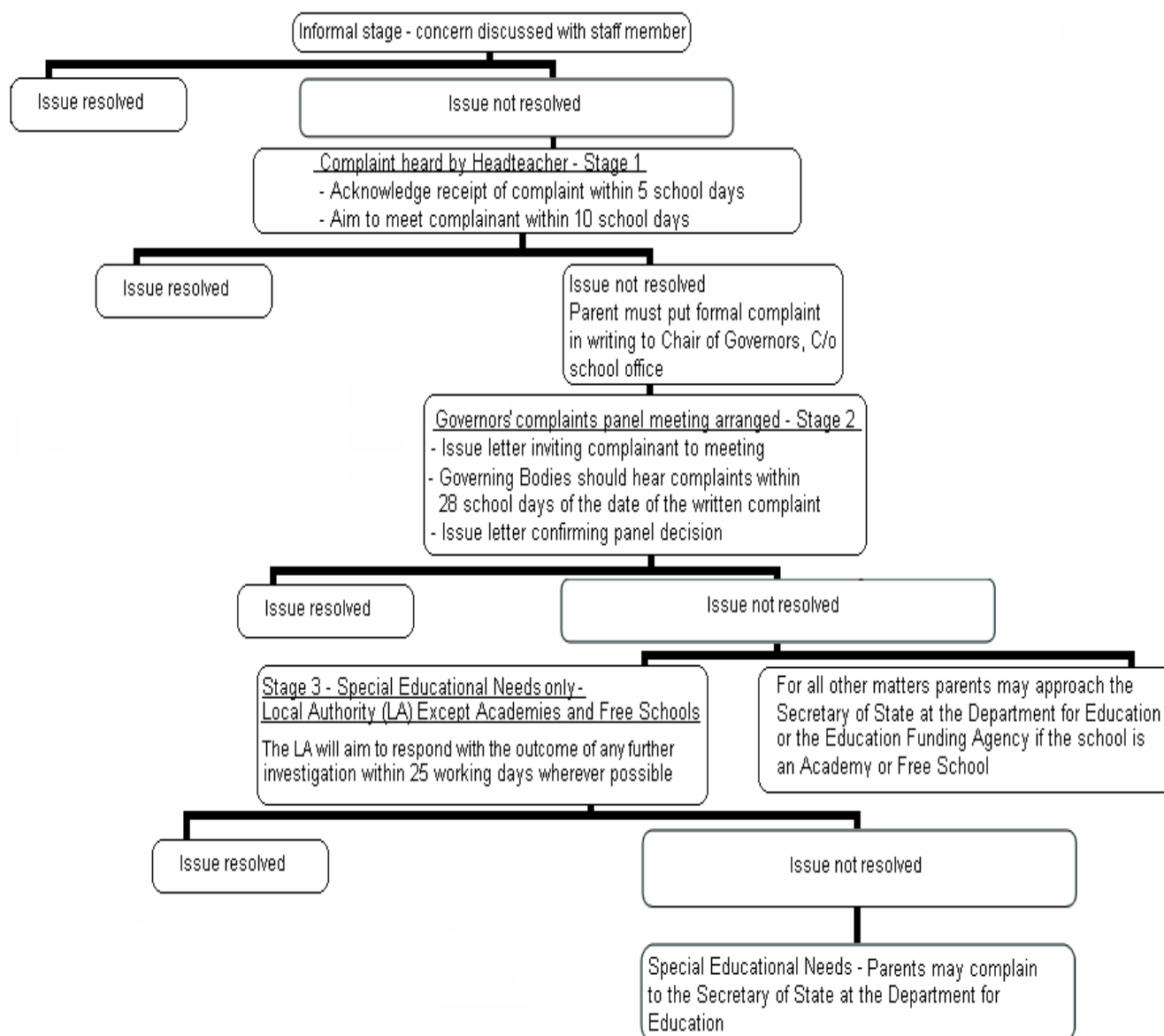
The Secretary of State, Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT,
Telephone: 0870 000 2288, Website: www.education.gov.uk

6.2 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

Chair of Governors	The school secretary can tell you who this is and pass on any written correspondence	
Complaints Team (Children's Services)	www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/hcc/childserv/comments/ Email: cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk	01992 588542
Parent Partnership Service (SEN)	www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk	01992 555847
ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)	www.ace-ed.org.uk	0300 0115 142
HertsHelp	www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp	0300 123 4044
Family Lives	www.familylives.org.uk	0808 800 2222
Carers in Herts	www.carersinherts.org.uk	01992 586969
Children's Legal Centre	www.childrenslegalcentre.com	01206 873820
Citizen's Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvice.org.uk	08444 111 444

Summary of the complaints process



Purwell Primary School Complaints Policy and Procedure - Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the School. Receipt will be acknowledged and what action will be taken will be explained.

Your Name:
Student's Name (If applicable):
Your relationship to the student:
Address:
Postcode:
Daytime 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? (Whom 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:

For Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

1.1 Purwell 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.

1.2 Purwell Primary School defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the excessive frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, prevent members of staff from undertaking other duties/responsibilities relevant to their role.’

1.3 A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still expecting their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

1.4 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or, in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false
- Using falsified information

- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

1.5 Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

1.6 Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

1.7 If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Purwell Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

1.8 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Purwell Primary School premises.