

Milverton Primary School Complaints Policy 2017



Agreed by: Head Teacher and Chair of Governors
Date Agreed: Spring Term 2017
Date to be reviewed: Spring Term 2020

Introduction

We believe that Milverton Primary School provides a good education for all our children, and that staff work hard to build positive relationships with parents. However, we recognise that problems can arise. This policy sets out the procedure that the school follows when a parent or carer or the general public has a complaint. The school will aim to reach a conclusion, satisfactory to all parties, at the earliest stage possible.

In dealing with complaints, Milverton Primary School aims to:

- be easily accessible
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- enable a full and fair investigation
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- be fair, honest and open when dealing with any complaint.

We give careful consideration to all complaints, which are dealt with as swiftly as possible and in confidence. The school has an open door policy. All staff and governors are approachable and aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues.

What is/is not covered by this policy?

This procedure covers complaints by parents or carers or members of the public that relate to the operation of the school or to action taken (or a lack of action) by the school.

This procedure does not cover complaints that relate to the matters outlined below, for which there are separate arrangements. Where a complaint is made and subsequently found to fall within the following categories, it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedures, and the complainant will be notified accordingly:

- Child protection issues
- Whistleblowing
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- school admissions and admission appeals
- staff disciplinary and grievance matters
- services provided by other organisations on the school site or through school

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. Milverton Primary School takes informal complaints seriously and will 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 below.

How to make a complaint:

a) INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS:

Step 1 Informal discussion with Class Teacher	It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Any complaint should first be taken to the class teacher either in person, by telephone or in writing. In most cases a response will be received within two school days. If this is not possible, due to the nature of the situation, the teacher will advise the complainant of their proposed action and the timescale in which to expect a response. Most matters can be dealt with in this way.
Step 2 Informal discussion with Head Teacher	If the complainant feels a satisfactory outcome has not been reached with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they may contact the head teacher either in person, by telephone or in writing. The head teacher will: acknowledge the complaint; make enquiries to establish the facts; seek advice as appropriate; attempt to resolve the matter informally; establish whether or not the complainant is satisfied; advise complainants of the next stages if they wish to proceed to a formal consideration of the complaint; make a brief note of the complaint and the outcome logging the information centrally. In most cases a response will be received within 20 school days – if this is not possible, due to the nature of the situation, the head teacher will advise the complainant of timescales in which to expect a response.

Please note:

- **If the complaint is made to a governor** at the informal stage, they will ask the complainant to contact the Class Teacher or Head Teacher to ensure the complaint follows this policy. The approached governor can support the complainant through the procedure, but note that this will debar them from any involvement should the complaint reach a formal stage.
- **If the complaint is about the Head Teacher**, the complainant should first make an informal approach either in person, in writing or by telephone to the Chair of governors, who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through dialogue with the school.
- If the complaint is about a governor, the complainant should first make an informal approach either in person, in writing or by telephone to the Chair of Governors, who is obliged to investigate it.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the person wishes to take the matter further, they should be advised to follow the below formal complaint procedure.

b) FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

Step 3 Formal complaint to Chair of Governors	If a satisfactory outcome has not been reached via the informal process above, a formal complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors via the school office. It should be marked "FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION" AND "PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL". The complaint must be made in writing stating the details of the complaint and how the school has addressed the complaint to date. On receipt of the complaint the Chair of Governors will invite the complainant to meet in person to discuss the complaint in greater detail, with the school providing the complainant with at least 3 days' notice of the meeting. The Chair will not discuss the complaint with the governing body at this stage so their judgement does not influence Governors required for step 4 (if the complaint is still unresolved).
Step 4 Governing body panel	If the meeting in step 3 does not produce a satisfactory conclusion, the complainant's written formal complaint referred to above will be looked at by the Complaints Panel, a group made up of three members of the governing body, <u>within ten working days</u> who have had no previous involvement in the complaint. If the governing body is aware of the substance of the complaint before this step the Chair will arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint e.g. governors from neighbouring schools. Once the complaints panel is confirmed, the complaint will be acknowledged and the complainant asked to suggest dates and times when they can attend a hearing. At the hearing, the complaints panel can: dismiss the complaint in whole or in part; uphold the complaint in whole or in part; decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure problems of a similar nature do not recur. Following the hearing, the Chair of the panel will write to the complainant and the Head Teacher to advise the outcome.
Step 6 Secretary of State for Education	If the complainant is still not content with the outcome, then s/he is entitled to appeal direct to the Secretary of State for Education via the DFE Helpline on 0370 000 2288.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Milverton Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain.

There may 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 Governors is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head Teacher logs all complaints received by the school in the Complaints Logbook, also recording how they were resolved. Recorded complaints are brought to the attention of the governing body, forming part of the termly Head Teacher's report to Governors. In order not to prejudice any appeals, and to maintain confidentiality, the details of complaints are not discussed. Instead, the report contains the number of complaints, if any, and the level at which they were resolved.

The governing body takes into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, making changes necessary to this policy as part of its review process.