

# **WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **COMPLAINT POLICY**

**Updated: October 2017**  
**Review Date: October 2020**

## **GUIDELINES**

For a general complaint:

**Step 1** If a parent/member of the public is concerned about anything to do with the education or support that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher if appropriate; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. If the complaint is in regard to any provision of facilities or services that our school provides, they should contact the school office.

**Step 2** Where a parent/member of the public feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with either the class teacher or school office, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will consider all matters of concern seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

**Step 3** Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the Head Teacher should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent/member of public should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors via the school office.

### **For a complaint about the Head Teacher:**

**Step 1** If a parent/member of the public is concerned about anything to do with the behaviour, leadership or management of the Head Teacher, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Head Teacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way.

**Step 2** Where a parent/member of the public feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the Head Teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair will consider all matters of concern seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

**Step 3** Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the Chair should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent/member of the public should send this written complaint to the Governing Body via the Clerk to the Governors.

### **Governing Body Complaints Committee**

The Governing Body must consider all written complaints **within 21 school working days** of receipt.

The Chair of Governors will nominate a governor to co-ordinate the procedure and will appoint a **Complaints Panel** consisting of 3 governors who are not employees of the school. The nominated Co-ordinator will chair the Complaints Panel.

The Co-ordinator will arrange a meeting of the Complaints Panel to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting so that they can explain the complaint in more detail. The school will give the complainant at least five days' notice of the meeting. If the complainant cannot attend the suggested date, a further date will be set. If the complainant does not attend the second date, a third and final date will be set, at which time the meeting will proceed without the complainant present.

The Head Teacher will write a report addressing the complaint and ensure that the Complaints Panel members and the complainant receive a copy 4 days before the meeting. (If it is a complaint about the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will write the report).

The complainant is invited to write a report addressing the issue and must ensure that the Complaints Panel members and the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) receives a copy 2 days before the meeting. Other written evidence will not be accepted at the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Check List for a Panel Hearing**

The panel must take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint (with the support of Parent Partnership or other advocate if required);
- the panel members and Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) may ask questions;
- the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to explain the school's actions (with support of DHT, SENCo or other supporter if required);
- the panel members or complainant may ask questions;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- the Chair of the Panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 3 working days;
- both parties leave the meeting while the panel decides on the issues.

When the panel has fully investigated the complaint, the Chair of the Panel, on behalf of the Governing Body, will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the complaint and any agreed action to be taken. The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

### **Investigating Complaints**

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint should make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

## **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure we will look for a way in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

The school will do its best to be helpful to people who contact them with a complaint or concern or a request for information. However, in cases where a school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks them to reconsider their position, schools will need to act appropriately.

Ultimately, if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice should be sought as to the next steps.

*Further advice can be obtained from 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016' DfE.*

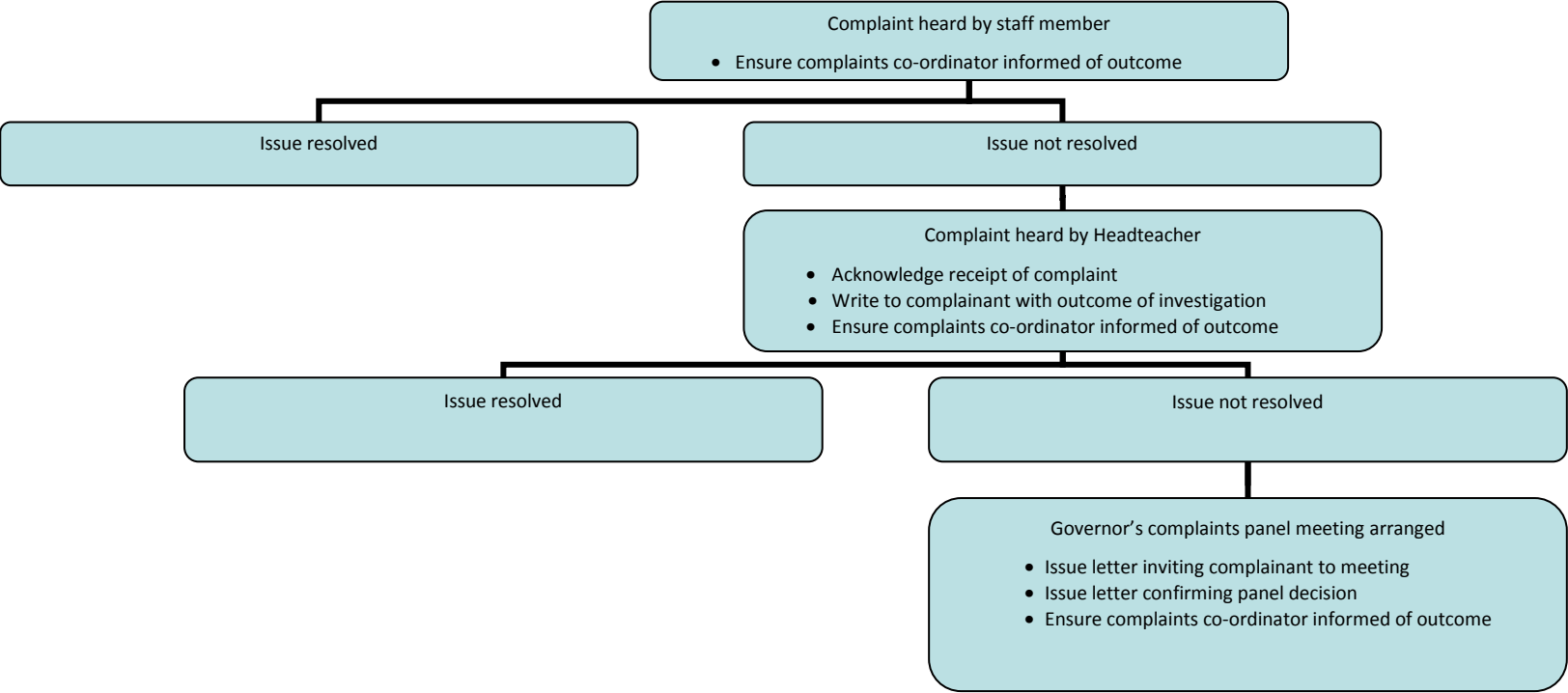
## **Unresolved Complaints**

From 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the LA should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

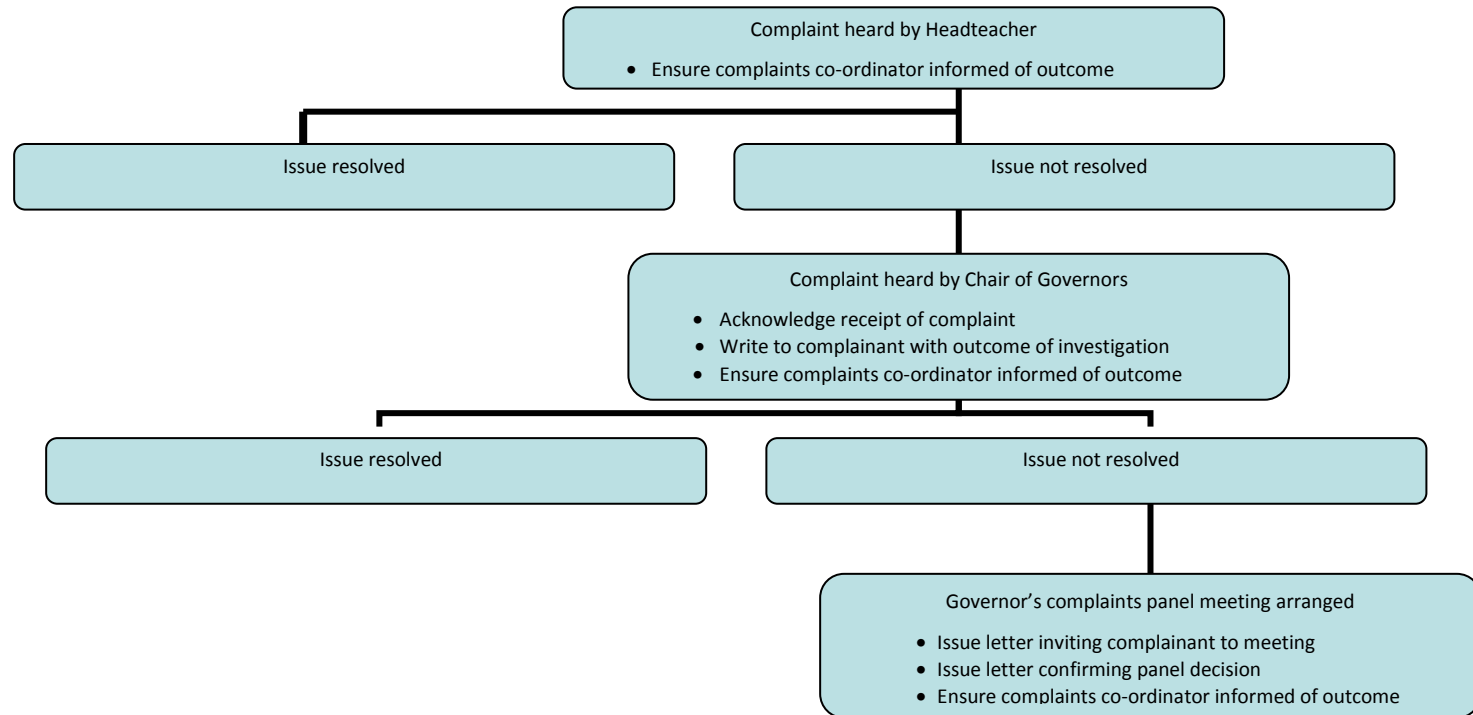
Further information can be obtained by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by writing to:

The Department for Education  
Schools Complaints Unit  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Picadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

# Summary of Dealing with Complaint



## Summary of Dealing with Complaint against Headteacher



## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Clerk to Governors, Complaints Co-ordinator, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if applicable):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable):</b>
<b>Address:</b>  <b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint.</b>

**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:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**