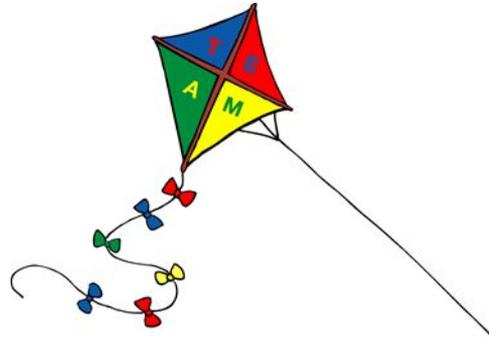


# Twyford St Mary's C of E Primary School

## Concerns and Complaints Policy Autumn 2016



This policy applies to all Staff, Governors, Parents and members of the public

### **Aim:**

- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- To focus on resolution and improvement rather than blame
- To ensure that any concerns and complaints are dealt with in a timely consistent and confidential manner

At Twyford St Mary's we understand that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns that they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this need arises.

### **INFORMAL STAGE**

Most issues can be quickly and informally resolved by discussion with the appropriate staff member.

Normally class teachers are the most appropriate people to speak to in the first instance, they work most closely with the children and are best placed to tackle day-to-day issues, they will always be happy to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet up. You can make an appointment directly or via the school office. If you would prefer to speak to the Headteacher, the school office will also be able to arrange this at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Whilst the School Governors are happy to help advise you on the School's Concerns or Complaints Policy, their best advice at the informal stage will always be to talk to the appropriate staff member or the Headteacher first because they are responsible for the operational running of the school. If the matter later becomes a formal complaint heard by Governors, any Governor you've already spoken to would be excluded from that process, as they could then not be regarded as impartial.

## **FORMAL STAGE**

In the unusual event that you are unable to resolve an issue informally, you will need to move on to the Formal Stage of the Complaints and Concerns Policy as outlined below:

### **Stage 1**

- Please write (via email or letter) to the Headteacher explaining the issue.
- You will receive written acknowledgement of your complaint by return within a maximum three working days.
- The Headteacher will meet with you as soon as reasonably possible to discuss the problem and to seek a mutually acceptable resolution.
- This process will take no more than ten days usually less.

### **Stage 2**

If the issue is still not resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 1:

- Please write to the Chair of Governors via the school office
- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge your letter within three school days and provide a full response within 15 school days.
- The chair of governors may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.
- The chair of governors will explain that the governing body has a strategic role, and is responsible for the school's strategic framework and the headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the governors' policies. The headteacher is solely responsible for making day to day decisions.
- This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties and discussions between the chair of governors and the headteacher will be key to resolving the complaint and agreeing a way forward.
- The chair of governors will decide what powers are available to governors in respect of the particular complaint.
- For matters that are the headteacher's responsibility, the chair of governors is empowered only to look at whether the headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.
- The chair of governors will keep a record of all interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint. If the chair of governors has decided not to take any further action, they will explain what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the chair of governor's response.

### **Stage 3**

If after all the steps in Stage 2 have been exhausted the issue is still not resolved to your satisfaction you may write to the clerk to the Governing Body at the school address asking for a Complaints Panel to be set up.

The Complaints Panel is made up of three members of the School's Governing Body. Sometimes Governors may need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies to ensure impartiality.

The Complaints Panel will meet at a time convenient to everyone involved. You, the Headteacher and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish.

The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give everyone involved an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that everyone is treated fairly. The Clerk to governors will minute the meeting and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The Panel will give its decision, in writing, within five working days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

#### **Stage 4**

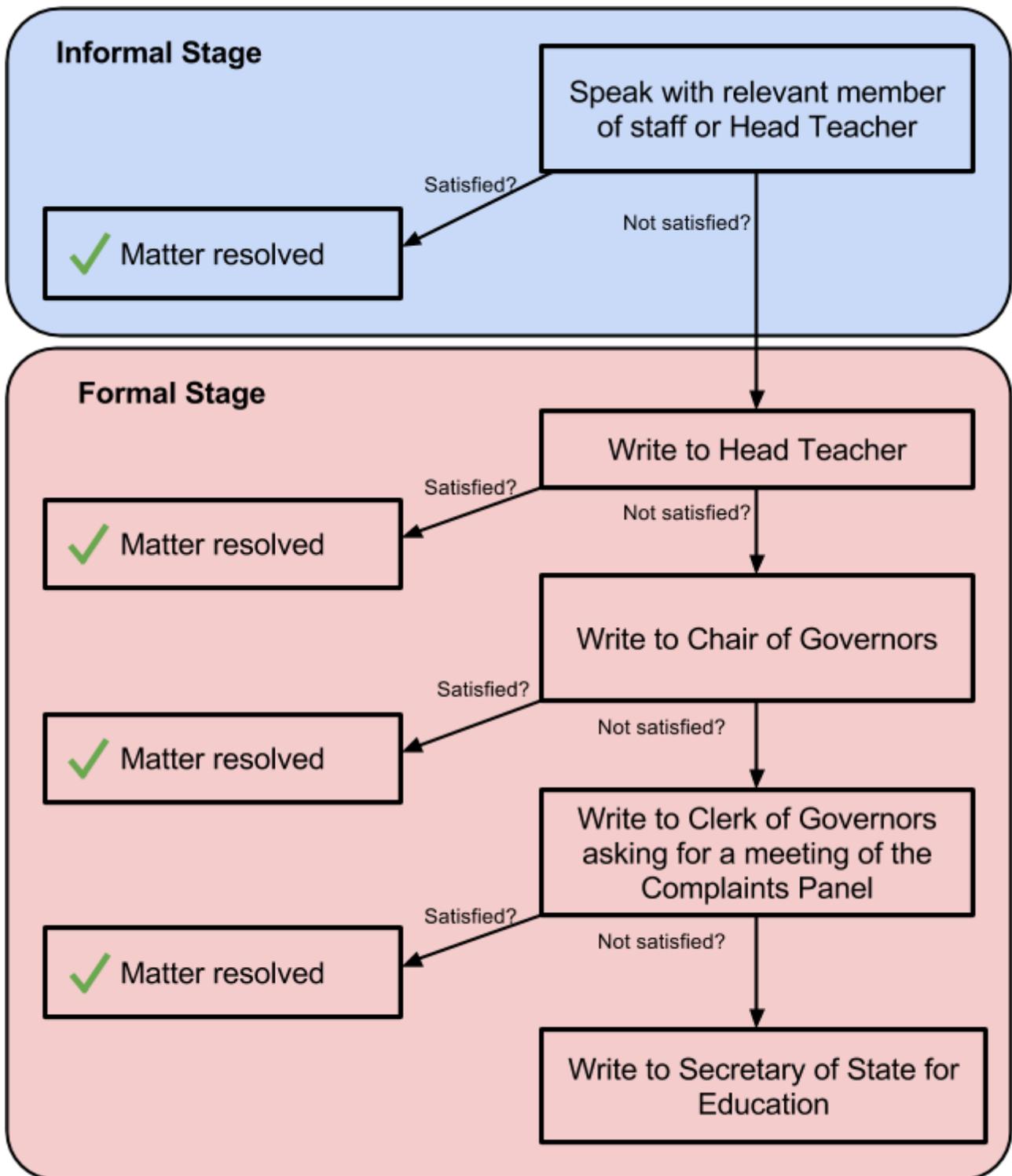
If you are not satisfied with the Complaints Panel decision you can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the following address: School Complaints Unit, Department for Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

#### **Monitoring of the Policy**

All complaints and the action taken will be documented in a central log and a summary included in the Headteacher's termly report to the governors, with advice on any implications for policies. The Complaints log will be reviewed annually by the Governors.

Policy ratified 14 Dec 2016

# Concerns and Complaints Flow Chart



Appendix A  
**Guidance Document For Parents**  
**What To Do When Things Go Wrong?**

Twyford St Mary's is committed to encouraging the involvement of parents in the community of the school and in their children's education. One aspect of this commitment is reflected by recognising that, from time to time, things may occur which cause parents concern, and that it is important that parents or children know what steps to take, to make sure that any problems are resolved.

These notes are intended to provide guidance to help parents with this process.

### **Who Should I Talk To?**

Most concerns can be dealt with most quickly and effectively through informal discussion with members of staff at school.

You are always welcome to come into school to discuss any concerns or problems that arise and are encouraged to talk to your child's teacher in the first instance, as the teacher, having knowledge of both the child and events in school, is often the best placed person to help.

### **Will What I Say Be Kept Confidential?**

You can expect that matters you raise will be treated in confidence, but parents also need to understand that to resolve problems, and find the best way forward, the teacher may have to make further enquiries. When this is the case, you can expect that this will be done with care, and that teachers will be sensitive to how such circumstances may affect your child. This is true for any investigation undertaken by the school, at any time.

### **What if it is Difficult to Talk To My Child's Teacher About My Concern?**

Sometimes you may feel that approaching your child's teacher could be awkward, especially if the matter you wish to discuss may affect a member of staff. If this is the case, or if talking to the teacher on a previous occasion does not seem to have resolved a particular problem, you should seek help from the Head Teacher.

The Head Teacher has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and will recognise that situations like this can be difficult and sensitive. You can expect the Headteacher to take the appropriate steps to follow up your concerns, and to discuss the outcome with you.

Obviously some time needs to be allowed for this to take place, but in most cases the Headteacher will contact you again within a relatively short space of time (ideally within two to three working days).

### **Can I Talk To Somebody Who Is Independent Of The School Staff?**

It is always possible to approach a School Governor with a concern. However, governors will always encourage you to talk to the appropriate staff member or the Headteacher first because they are responsible for the operational running of the school. The governor will support you in doing this, if you feel that this may be helpful. If the matter later becomes a formal complaint heard by Governors, any Governor you've already spoken to would be excluded from that process, as they would not be impartial. Or, alternatively, you may wish to ask a friend to help you with this.

### **What is the Difference Between an Informal and a Formal Complaint?**

Each of the situations above is an example of how concerns may be addressed informally.

Good communication and discussion of problems allow issues to be dealt with quickly. The process is a verbal one and usually only directly involves you, as the parent, and a member of staff or the Headteacher.

Dealing with matters informally does not mean that the concerns are not taken seriously, nor that agreed actions will not be followed through.

A complaint becomes formal when you feel that your concern is too serious to be dealt with informally, or when you feel that informal approaches to the school have not been adequately dealt with.

### **What Happens If I Need To Make A Formal Complaint?**

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher and all investigations resulting from this and any responses made by the school will also be documented.

If the complaint itself relates to the Headteacher, then the complaint needs to be made in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body (c/o Twyford St Mary's).

Certain types of complaint are already covered by statutory procedures laid down by Hampshire County Council and the Government. These cover complaints about the curriculum, admissions and exclusions of pupils from school. You can expect to receive written acknowledgement of your complaint from the school within three working days of them receiving your letter.

If the complaint is covered by a statutory procedure the school will provide you with details of how the procedures work. You will also be offered an opportunity to discuss the process and to provide the school with any further information you think should be considered. This will happen even if your concern falls outside the areas covered by the statutory arrangement, because the school follows similar principles to deal with complaints about other aspects of school life.

### **What Happens Next?**

When you receive the formal acknowledgement of your complaint from the Headteacher, you will also be given an estimated date by which you can expect a full response.

The Headteacher will provide you with an opportunity to discuss the process and to add any additional information you feel is important.

The Headteacher will also take the appropriate steps to investigate the matter, and will keep written records of the investigation.

As soon as the relevant facts have been established, you will receive a written response from the Headteacher, which includes an explanation of the decision that has been reached, the reasons for the decision and the actions that need to be taken to resolve your complaint.

The Headteacher may also wish to discuss this with you directly beforehand. You can expect to receive your formal response within ten working days of the original acknowledgement of your complaint. If a delay is anticipated, the school should keep you informed, in writing, of progress and when you are likely to receive details of the outcome of the investigation.

If complaints were made about the actions of the Headteacher, it would be normal for the Chair of the Governing Body to carry out the investigation at this stage.

### **I Still Feel That Matters Have Not Been Resolved. What Should I Do?**

It is very rare that a complaint will reach this stage, but if it does, the next step in the process will involve an independent and impartial review by a panel from the Governing Body.

You should write to the Governing Body, requesting that your complaint proceeds to this stage. Your letter can be sent via the school. They will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and will arrange for the panel to meet at a time that is convenient to all involved.

The panel will consist of three governors who have had no prior involvement in the matter in question. All relevant documents relating to the complaint will be provided to the panel beforehand.

You will receive notification of the date and location that the panel will meet at least seven days in advance of the meeting. You will also be informed that you have the right to go to the meeting and to be accompanied by a friend, legal representative or interpreter. The Head teacher will also be invited to attend the meeting.

Whilst discussions at the meeting will be documented, the meeting will be as informal as

possible, with the main aim being to resolve the problem raised and to achieve reconciliation between you and the school. It provides an opportunity for you to explain your complaint and concerns, for the Headteacher to explain the school's response and for all people present to seek clarification through questions and discussion. Once the discussion has ended, everyone, apart from the panel, will leave the meeting and the panel will review matters and reach its decision.

A written decision on the complaint will be provided to you, and to the school, by the panel, within fifteen working days. You will also be advised of what options are open to you to appeal against the decision. It is very rare though, that a complaint will need to progress to these stages.

## Sample of a complaint form

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</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>
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**