

THE FOREST SCHOOL

POLICY TITLE	Complaints Policy
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY	Headteacher

WHO IS GOVERNED BY THIS POLICY

Governors, Staff and Parents

POINT (S) OF CONTACT

Chair of Governors, Headteacher

LINKS TO THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Safeguarding, Child Protection, Health and Safety

MAIN ECM OUTCOMES (EVERY CHILD MATTERS)

Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, Achieve Economic Well-being

Our principal aim is to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice

Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

- Be publicised in the School Prospectus and on The Forest School website
- Be simple to understand and follow
- Be focused on outcomes
- Have established time limits for action
- Keep relevant people informed at all stages
- Where necessary, respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated
- Provide the necessary information to the School's Senior Leadership Team should the School's procedures need to be improved

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Relevant member of staff:** receives and responds to complaints from parents / members of the public at Stage 1 of the procedure
- **Relevant Assistant Headteacher:** receives and responds to complaints from parents / members of the public at Stage 2 of the procedure
- **Headteacher:** receives and responds to complaints from parents / members of the public at Stage 3 of the procedure

- **Chair of Governors and Governors Complaints Panel:** receives and responds to complaints from parents / members of the public at Stage 4 of the procedure
- **Clerk to the Governors:** liaises with the complainant(s) and the Chair of Governors at Stage 4 of the procedure
- **Local Authority:** can attend a Governors Complaints Panel meeting on request of either the complainant(s) and/or the Governors

PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION

The Forest School values your views and opinions and if you think we could do something better, then we need to know. We hope that most concerns can be settled informally but this Complaints Procedure explains how a more formal investigation can be conducted. We would seek to resolve most issues before they become a formal complaint. Complaints are more serious and can take longer to resolve, and they are therefore usually dealt with by the Headteacher.

CONCERN OR COMPLAINT?

A general rule that may help in deciding whether your need to contact the school is a CONCERN or a COMPLAINT, is that most concerns relate to pupils whilst they are in the school. Concerns are usually quickly and effectively dealt with, often by someone who knows your child well.

A concern will often be about the following:

- Your child's learning
- Bullying
- Theft
- Friendship groups
- Relationships with staff
- School procedures

SCOPE

- Parental complaints are generally made when parents feel that the school has not dealt with their concern satisfactorily.
- Members of the public may also make a formal complaint about an aspect of the school.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The school's Complaints Coordinator is the Headteacher. The Headteacher is responsible for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure and will be able to provide further information on request. If the complaint is in relation to the Headteacher, the complainant may refer the matter to the Chair of Governors who will designate another member of staff or other person to act as Complaints Coordinator.

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

We would ask you to bear the following in mind when trying to contact someone at the school:

- All members of staff will respond to your concern as soon as they can. This may not be immediately – please be patient. We endeavour to acknowledge all communication from parents within 48 hours.
- It is helpful to leave a number and indicate a time when you can be contacted easily over the next few days.
- A positive outcome is more likely to be ensured if the concern is expressed calmly and pleasantly.

Written Correspondence

If a letter is addressed to an individual member of staff, it will be put in their pigeon-hole. Staff generally check their pigeon-holes once a day.

Telephone calls

Telephone calls will be redirected to the extension of the member of staff concerned. If that member of staff is teaching, or otherwise unavailable, you will be invited to leave a voicemail. Staff generally check their voicemails once a day.

Emails

Emails should be addressed to: office@forest.w-sussex.sch.uk They will then be forwarded to the member of staff concerned. It is school policy not to give out individual staff emails, for security purposes. Staff generally check their emails once a day.

WHO TO CONTACT AT THE SCHOOL: AN AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE

ISSUE	WHO TO CONTACT	HOW
<p>Concerns about pupil progress</p> <p>Homework</p>	Subject teacher	<p>Note in Home-School diary</p> <p>Telephone call</p> <p>Letter</p> <p>Email</p>
<p>Set changes</p> <p>Concern about Curriculum Area policy</p>	Director of Learning	<p>Telephone call</p> <p>Letter</p> <p>Email</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil absence • Tutor group issues • Lost property / theft • Concerns at home • Concerns about pupil relationships • Uniform • Bullying 	<p>Tutor</p> <p>Community Leader</p>	<p>Note in Home-School diary</p> <p>Telephone call</p> <p>Letter</p> <p>Email</p>
<p>General information, if you do not have a contact name</p>	Reception – they will then direct you	<p>Note in Home-School diary</p> <p>Telephone call</p> <p>Letter</p> <p>Email</p>
<p>COMPLAINT</p>	<p>You can download a copy of our Complaints Policy from our website: www.theforestschool.com If you prefer, you may collect a copy of the policy from Reception.</p>	<p>Telephone call</p> <p>Letter</p> <p>Email</p>

THE FOREST SCHOOL STAGED COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE AN OVERVIEW

Complaints Procedure: Stage One

The school receives a letter / email / phone call raising a particular issue or complaint. This will be logged by the School Office.

The information is passed on to the relevant member of staff (see chart above).

The concerns are discussed informally with the relevant teacher.

The issue is then dealt with to the satisfaction of all involved parties and the paperwork is filed
OR

Complaints Procedure: Stage Two

The issue is not resolved, and is passed on to the relevant Assistant Headteacher.

It is then dealt with to the satisfaction of all involved parties and the paperwork is filed
OR

Complaints Procedure: Stage Three

The issue is not resolved and the Headteacher is informed formally in writing of the concerns.

It is then dealt with to the satisfaction of all involved parties and the paperwork is filed
OR

Complaints Procedure: Stage Four

The issue is still not resolved, and the parent / member of public makes a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors or a nominated Governor who will then convene a Complaints Panel.

Should this also prove unsuccessful, the parent / member of public will then be invited to contact the Local Authority.

DETAILED GUIDANCE ON EACH STAGE OF THE PROCEDURE

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher

Most complaints can be resolved at this informal stage.

Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view.

If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.

The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. This assurance should be made in writing and within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint.

A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Complaints Coordinator should monitor these records.

If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, they should contact the relevant Assistant Headteacher for the year group or Curriculum Team area involved or the Headteacher if appropriate.

All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the relevant Assistant Headteacher

More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the Assistant Headteacher who will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.

A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.

Stage Three: Discuss concerns formally with the Headteacher

More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 2 should be referred to the Headteacher who will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.

A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.

The Headteacher should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing.

If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details should remain confidential to the Headteacher. However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.

Stage Four: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or a nominated Governor) who will then convene a Complaints Panel

Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaints Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to either the Chair of Governors or the nominated Governor and all previous stages have been exhausted. Where all previous stages have not been exhausted, the complainant will be notified that the above process is still ongoing and must be completed.

Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the Clerk to the Governing Body within 5 school days.

It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full Governing Body does not hear the complaint at this stage. Any Governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.

The Governing Body may agree upon the procedures for the Complaints Panel meeting. However, the Chair of Governors will usually, within five school days of receiving the complaint, convene a small panel of 3 or 5 Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. In the event that the Chair is unable to act or is the subject of the complaint, the Panel will be convened by the Deputy Chair. The person appointing the panel will also nominate the chair of the panel. The Panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.

The Chair of the Panel should notify the Headteacher and the complainant as to whether they are to be invited to attend the Panel meeting. Alternatively, the Panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Headteacher is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.

If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Headteacher has already taken action, the Governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.

The Headteacher and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days after the date upon which the complaint is made.

This is the final stage in the School's Complaints Procedure.

Please note that officers of the Schools Support Team will attend Complaints Panel meetings on request. The officer's role is to act as an independent observer and/or to offer advice on procedure. The involvement of the officer may also help to reassure the complainant that the procedure has been carried out correctly and fairly, even if he/she dislikes the outcome.

The decision of the Governing Body's Complaints Panel is final. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, advice should be sought from the Leadership and Governance Team: -

**Children and Young People's Services
Leadership and Governance
North Eastern Area Professional Centre
Furnace Drive
Furnace Green
Crawley
West Sussex RH10 6JB
Tel 01293 423501**

There is NO opportunity to appeal against a decision. The process has to be followed and if the resolution is not satisfactory the complainant should write to the Secretary of State.

Approved by Governing Body on (date): _____

Signed: _____

(Chair of Governors)

Review Date: _____