



# Complaints Policy

September 2014

**Rationale:**

The education of the children at Ings Farm Primary School is strengthened by a good partnership between the school and home.

Where there are concerns, it will always be our intention to seek a resolution. This will always be carried out in the true spirit of reconciliation.

It is hoped that all concerns can be dealt with informally. However, where this is not possible, formal procedures will be adopted.

**Objectives:**

- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage.
- To resolve issues as quickly as possible within a given timescale.
- To focus on resolution.
- To promote confidentiality and discretion.
- To be accessible to all parents.

**The Process - A Staged Approach.****Informal:**

1. It is natural that, initially, parents will want to discuss any concerns that they may have with their child's class teacher. This usually enables problems to be sorted out quickly, to everyone's satisfaction.
2. Where it may be felt that this is not appropriate or you wish to take your concern further, an appointment should be made with the Head teacher.  
If the Head teacher is not immediately available, the matter will be recorded with the date, name, contact address or telephone number and the nature of the complaint.
3. If the concern is not resolved at this stage, the complainant should then contact the chair of the Governing Body.

**Stage 1 - Head teacher:**

1. Parents to write to the Head teacher, giving details of the concern and enclosing any appropriate paperwork.
2. Head teacher to respond to the parent in writing as soon as possible to acknowledge the complaint and offer a full response within five working days.
3. If the complainant requires an in-depth investigation, the Head teacher will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual - this will be completed within ten working days.
4. The main points of any meeting between parents and Head teacher will be summarised in a follow-up letter, to ensure that all parties have a clear record of progress and agreements.
5. If, after the above, the parent remains dissatisfied, then the complaints process moves to Stage 2.

**Stage 2 - Chair of Governors:**

1. Parents should write to the Chair of Governors at the school address outlining the complaint, explaining the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Head teacher's response and enclosing any relevant paperwork.
2. The Chair of Governors to respond to the parent in writing as soon as possible to acknowledge the complaint and offer a full response within five working days.

3. If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Chair of Governors will acknowledge this and let the complainants know that a full response will take longer than usual - this will be completed within ten working days.
4. Informal discussions between the Head teacher and Chair of Governors may achieve conciliation, thus preventing any further escalation of the disagreement.
5. Chair of Governors will need to decide who is responsible for dealing with the issues involved and therefore what powers are available to the Governing Body.
  - a. Delegated to the Head teacher by the Governing Body.
  - b. Fall within the Governing Body remit only.
  - c. Are within the Head teacher's Terms and Conditions of Employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school.
6. The Chair of Governors:
  - a. May look at the whole issue afresh.
  - b. If the matter relates to the Head teacher's conduct, the Chair will apply the Staff Disciplinary Procedure.
  - c. If the matter is the Head teacher's responsibility, then the Chair can only look at whether the Head teacher acted reasonably, in light of the information available at the time.
7. If the parent remains unhappy with the outcome, then the Chair of Governors may offer a Right of Appeal to the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

### **Stage 3 - Governing Body Complaints Panel:**

1. The Appeal would then be made in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body, detailing what has happened to date and why they are unhappy with the outcome.
2. The Parent can either reconsider the complaint or review the complaint.
3. The Panel will consist of three Governors with no prior involvement in the matter.
4. The Panel will meet and then inform the complainant in writing of the decision of the panel. This will be within ten working days. The letter should include:
  - Summary of the issues.
  - Outline the main points of discussion.
  - Reasons for the decision.
  - Proposed actions or outcomes.

This is the final stage of the School's Complaints Procedure for general complaints.

If a parent believes that the Head teacher and the Governing Body's actions have been unreasonable, or the correct process has not been adhered to, the only recourse is the Secretary of State. It may be helpful for parents to seek advice from the Local Education Authority (LEA) at this stage.

### **Stage 4 - Role of the Local Education Authority (LEA):**

1. For general complaints about a school, the LEA clearly has no remit or powers beyond reminding schools of their legal obligations. Therefore, for individual general complaints which relate to internal school matters and have exhausted the school's own complaints procedure (that is, they have completed Stage 3) there is no right of appeal to the LEA, as it has no powers to direct the school to change its decision.
2. If a complaint cannot be resolved further, Head teachers, Governors and Parents or other complainants may seek advice from the LEA's complaints adviser.

**Secretary of State:**

If a parent wishes to pursue a complaint because they feel a school has acted unreasonably, they can write to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State will contact the *Governing Body* and the *Local Education Authority (LEA)* for more detailed information. The Secretary of State has the power to direct the school to revise an action using the same criteria as applied by the *Governors*.