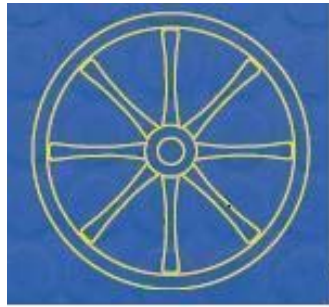


Complaints Policy

Wheelwright Lane Primary School

Date written: January 2016

Review: Annually



Learning For Life

Procedures For Dealing With Parental Complaints

At Wheelwright Lane Primary School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school.

This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

Opportunities to vent frustrations via social media may appear to be quick and easy but are rarely an appropriate vehicle for solving problems that are in school. Other channels, such as those laid out in this complaints procedure, are much better suited for purpose. For guidelines on parental use of social media, please refer to Appendix 2.

Context: This policy is applicable for all members of staff employed and contracted by Wheelwright Lane Primary. If the complaint involves an external body to the school such as Contractors, County Caterers or School Crossing Patrol, for example, then the complaints form should be filled in and the Head teacher will pass this onto the relevant employing body. A copy will be kept for reference in the school concerns log.

Complaints procedures should not be used for appeals or referrals that fall under other guidance including:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- SEND
- Staff Grievances
- Child Protection
- Whistleblowing

INFORMAL STAGE

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned, usually the class teacher. Parent/carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a pupil, ideally the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the pupil, in the first instance the class teacher or alternatively the Deputy Head teacher, depending on the nature of the concern. The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents/carers can ask for a copy of these notes which will just contain the main bullet point facts.

FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal stages:

Stage 1

If a parent/carer is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff, can refer the matter to the Head teacher. This should be in writing, using the complaints form attached to the policy. This will be available online and in the school office. This will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Head teacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time to discuss and clarify what the issues are and what the parent/carer wants to achieve.

If the issue is complex the Head Teacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Head Teacher should inform the parent/carer that this will take longer, explaining the reasons for this and giving a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

At the conclusion of the investigation, all parties will agree an acceptable outcome that is to the satisfaction of all parties involved. This should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding and all parties should receive a copy.

Stage 2

After meeting with the Headteacher, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This should be in writing to the Chair at the school address. The Headteacher can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1. It should be ensured that the complaint is in writing and includes the complaints form attached to this policy - email and other forms of electronic communication are not acceptable.

The Chair of Governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be investigated within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant explaining the reasons for the delay and when it is expected that the investigation will be completed. Reasons for the delay may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays.

At the conclusion of this investigation, all parties will agree an acceptable outcome that is to the satisfaction of all parties involved. This should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding and all parties should receive a copy.

Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or if the Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a complaints committee to review the complaint. The Chair of Governors will decide if this is appropriate.

As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The Chair of Governors will appoint a member of the Governing body as an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers will be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial so s/he will not be a member of the associated complaints committee.

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

The Complaints Committee will meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Head teacher, the Chair of Governors 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 the person making the complaint and the Head teacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the clerk to governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

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

Stage 4

If, after this school-based process, the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Local Authority, who may be able to offer guidance and advice if the Governing Body cannot deal with the complaint.

If it is felt that the Governing Body and the Local Authority have acted unreasonably about concerns, then the Secretary of State for Education can be written to with details regarding the steps already taken and the responses received.

Other complaints

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a pupil of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Head Teacher, preferably in writing.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

It should be noted that schools do not usually need to consider complaints made more than three months after the incident/situation. However complaints made in exceptional circumstances will, of course, receive consideration. If such a complaint is made, the school will write to the complainant explaining the time restrictions.

Complaints that cannot be resolved

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will 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 the GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

This Policy was ratified by Governors on: 3rd March 2016.....

and will be reviewed in:March 2018.....

Complaints Log

Your Name	
Pupils Name	
You relationship to pupil	
Address	
Daytime telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of your complaint	
Who have you spoken to regarding the complaint and what was the response?	
What actions do you feel would resolve the situation?	
Are you attaching any further information (Please state)	
Signature	
Date	
For Office Use only: Action Taken	

Policy on Parental use of Social Networking and Internet Sites

Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out this School's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. When we have referred to "parent" in this document, we also include carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the School.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents;
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites;
- Safeguard the reputation of the School from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites;
- Clarify what the School considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents;
- Set out the procedures the School will follow where it considers parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the School, its staff or its pupils, and anyone else associated with the School; and
- Set out the action the School will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the School and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the School recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the School be more appropriate? e.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the School has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?

- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the School; any detrimental harm that the School may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the School/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.

Procedure the School will follow if inappropriate use continues

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the School will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Set out the School's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the Police where the School feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the School may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
- Take other legal action against the individual.