

Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School

**'Together, we enjoy learning in a happy,
caring and friendly environment'**



COMPLAINTS POLICY

**This Policy was agreed by the Full Governing Body in
Autumn (2023)**

It will be reviewed in Autumn (2026)

(L & M Committee)

Signed:

H. R. Robbins

(Chair of Governors)

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01. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant school about any provisions of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

02. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONCERNS AND A COMPLAINT

A concern may be defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurance is sought.”

A complaint may be defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.”

03. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

04. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Northamptonshire County Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

05. INTRODUCTION TO HIGHAM FERRERS NURSERY AND INFANT SCHOOL POLICY

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than a year it will not be investigated.

The prime aim of Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

06. 5 MAIN STAGES - SUMMARY

In summary they are as follows: -

Stage 1 A concern is raised informally with a staff member.

Stage 2 Formal complaint is heard by a Senior Member of Staff.

Stage 3 Complaint is heard by Head Teacher

Stage 4 Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

Stage 5 Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

07. STAGE 1- RAISING A CONCERN

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern.

The school requests that parents make their first contact with child's Class Teacher.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two.

If the Head Teacher is the first recipient of a complaint, he/she can decide whether to delegate consideration to another member of staff under Stage One/Two or to proceed to Stage Three.

The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 1 you can escalate it to Stage 2. You will be given a copy of the Complaints Policy and you are requested to put your complaint in writing, including how you would like the complaint to be resolved, within 10 school working days.

08. STAGE 2- COMPLAINT HEARD BY A SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF

Formal complaints shall be put in writing and addressed to the Head Teacher. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 2 school working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school working days.

The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 2 please write to the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. You will need to tell the school why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do.

09. STAGE 3 - COMPLAINT HEARD BY HEADTEACHER

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Head Teacher will arrange further investigation or if stage 2 was dealt with by the Head Teacher then you should write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. Following the investigation, the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors will normally give a written response within 10 school working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the result at Stage 3, you should let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response.

10. STAGE 4 - COMPLAINT HEARD BY CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 3, the Chair of Governors will arrange further investigation. Following the investigation, the Chair of Governors will respond in writing within 10 school working days. If you are dissatisfied with the results at Stage 4, you should let the Chair of Governors know within 10 school working days of getting the response. (*Communication at stage 4 must only be done in writing or at face to face meetings.*)

11. STAGE 5 - COMPLAINT HEAR BY PANEL OF GOVERNORS

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 4, the Chair of Governors will convene a Complaints Appeal Panel. The membership of the committee will be checked before each hearing to ensure that no member of the committee has had perceived or actual involvement in the matter. Care will be taken that no committee member has any personal links with either the Complainant or the person against whom the complaint has been made. If there is any doubt about a person's ability to act impartially or fairly or there may be a conflict or potential conflict of interest, the governing body has final decision whether that person should be a member of the committee or any appeal committee. Substitute members may be appointed as necessary. The hearing will normally take place within 10 school working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 5 investigation.

The aim of the Complaints Appeal Panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 28 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

(*Communication at stage 5 must only be done in writing or at face to face meetings.*)

12. IF THE COMPLAINT CONCERNS THE HEADTEACHER

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the person first receiving it should refer it to the Chair of Governors. The Chair may choose to investigate the complaint him/herself or delegate investigation of the complaint to the Vice Chair or other designated governor. Whichever governor carries out the investigation will not then be a member of the Complaints Appeal Committee.

The Chairman, or investigating governor, will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing, within 5 school days. After investigation, the Chairman or investigating governor will give a written response within 10 school working days. If the Complainant is not happy with the outcome then he/ she will be advised to write to the Vice Chair – if the Chair carried out the investigation, or the Chair – if the Vice

Chair or another delegated governor carried out the investigation who will refer the matter to the Chair of the Complaints Appeal Committee for consideration in accordance with Stage 5.

13. IF THE COMPLAINT CONCERNS THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Any complaints against the Chair of Governors should be sent in writing to the Vice Chair who should immediately inform the Head Teacher and the LEA. The Vice Chair of Governors may choose to investigate the complaint him/herself or delegate investigation to another designated governor. Alternatively, the Vice Chair may refer the matter directly to the Complaints Appeals Committee. The Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee will then proceed to Stage 5.

14. IF THE COMPLAINT CONCERNS THE CHAIR AND THE VICE CHAIR

Any Complaints against the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors should be sent in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body, who will refer the matter directly to the Complaints Appeals Committee. The Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee will then proceed to Stage 5.

If the complaint concerns the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors

Any Complaints against the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors should be sent in writing to the Vice Chair who should immediately inform the LEA. The Vice Chair of Governors may choose to investigate the complaint him/herself or delegate investigation to another designated governor. Alternatively, the Vice Chair may refer the matter directly to the Complaints Appeals Committee. The Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee will then proceed to Stage 5.

15. IF THE COMPLAINT CONCERNS A GOVERNOR (INCLUDING THE VICE CHAIR) AND A GROUP OF GOVERNORS

If your complaint is against the actions of one governor or a group of governors, you should refer it to the Chair who will deal with it in the same way as if the complaint had been made against the Head Teacher. If the Chair is involved as part of the group being complained about, the complaint should be sent to the Vice Chair who will deal with it in the same way as if the complaint had been made against the Head Teacher. If the Chair and Vice Chair are both involved as part of the group being complained about, the complaint should be given to the Clerk to the governing body. The Clerk will forward the complaint to the Chair of the Complaints Appeals Committee for action under Stage 5. If the number of governors who are subject of the complaint result in there being too few governors to form a Complaints Appeals Committee, then the procedure for complaints against a whole governing body (below) will be used.

16. IF THE COMPLAINT CONCERNS THE WHOLE GOVERNOING BODY

Any complaint against the actions of a whole governing body should be sent to the Clerk to the governing body who will immediately inform the Head Teacher, Chair and the LEA. The LEA will then consider whether the matter is causing such concern that it can issue a warning notice to the governing body in accordance with its powers of intervention. If this is not necessary, then the LEA, will seek the agreement of the governing body to have the complaint heard by a specially constituted and independent committee. If the LEA decide not to take any action, they will ask the Clerk to inform the Complainant that the matter will be raised at the next meeting of the governing body. The Chair may arrange a Special meeting to consider the matter, if the next meeting is some time away. The governing body may look at evidence and arrive at a decision in the same way that its Complaints Appeals Committee would. The clerk will then send in writing the decision and an explanation of the reasons for the decision to the Complainant.

17. UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact Complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School defines unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*. It this instant they will be referred to the Dealing with Persistent or Serial Complaints/Harassment in School Policy.

18. FEEDING BACK ABOUT COMPLAINTS

The above time scales will be used when referring back to the Complainant. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will report back the outcomes of the complaint to the Head Teacher within a few days of informing the Complainant.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, the governing body will report back to the Chair of Governors and Head Teacher within a week of feeding back to the Complainant.

19. HANDLING INFORMATION

All complaints will be kept confidential, with only those involved in investigating and making a decision being made aware of the details of the complaint. The person who is being complained about will also be entitled to know the substance of the complaint against them. The governing body has discretion to withhold information when there is sufficient reason, such as where there is a need to protect a source,

where there is a legal reason why the information should not be released or to meet data protection requirements

There are separate and established procedures already in existence for some complaints. This procedure should NOT be used for complaints relating to Whistleblowing, Admissions or Safeguarding.

This policy has been updated in line with the DfE Model Complaints Procedure 2020

20. APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS FORM

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mrs Toyer (Headteacher) or Mrs Robbins (Chair of Governors) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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: