



Atwood Primary School

Raising Concerns and Resolving Complaints

The Head Teacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair. Once there has been an opportunity for the Head Teacher to consider this, he/she will be invited to meet separately with the Chair, in order to present written and oral evidence in response. The Head Teacher may be accompanied at this meeting by a friend or representative.

When the investigation has been concluded, the complainant and the Head Teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Chair is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or considers that the decision of the Chair is perverse, or that the Chair has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then the complainant may request that the Governing Body review the handling of the complaint by the Chair. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Chair, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures. At this stage, the complaint should be addressed to the Vice-Chair.

Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the Head Teacher or the Chair shall be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body. The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant.

The panel will then invite the Head Teacher or the Chair, as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The complainant, and the Head Teacher or the Chair, as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly so the matter is now closed.
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full and the Governing Body will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation

The complainant is not entitled to access to any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child. Any information relating to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential. If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

From time to time parents/carers, and others connected with the school, will become aware of matters which cause them concern. To encourage resolution of such situations the Governing Body has adopted a "General Complaints Procedure".

It is important that anyone wishing to raise a concern follows the correct procedure. Occasionally stories about schools find their way into the local newspapers and, depending on their nature, can damage a school's reputation. Nobody connected with Atwood should want this. Parents/carers choose this school because of its good reputation. A complaint or concern should be seen as a way to make this school even better.

Note also that the Local Authority does not get involved with such concerns. If a matter is raised with the LA or with an MP, they pass the matter back to the school.

Our complaints procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned, except matters relating to the curriculum, exclusion, admissions, etc. which are subject to separate procedures.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be non-adversarial
- Provide confidentiality
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly
- Address all the points at issue
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur.

General Principles:

- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered, save in exceptional circumstances.
- Investigation of any complaint or review request will begin within 5 school days of receipt of the same, save in exceptional circumstances. The investigation will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Complaining about the actions of a member of staff other than the Head Teacher

1) Informal Stage

The complainant is normally expected to arrange to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head Teacher. It is important that the complainant makes an attempt at an informal resolution, otherwise the head teacher may decide not to progress the complaint any further.

2) Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Head Teacher, who will be responsible for its investigation. The Head Teacher may delegate the responsibility to another member of staff.

The complainant should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. In addition the Head Teacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the complaint.

The Head Teacher will collect such other evidence as he/she deems necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff, who is the subject of the complaint, that member of staff may be accompanied by a friend or representative if they wish.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant, and the member of staff concerned, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures etc. but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released
- The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the head teacher is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request that the Governing Body review the process followed by the Head Teacher in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Head Teacher, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described in *The Review Process* will be followed.

If the complainant considers that the decision of the Head Teacher is perverse, or that the Head Teacher has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then the complainant may bring a complaint against the Head Teacher under the next part of this procedure. This will provide an opportunity for the evidence to support such a complaint to be investigated.

Complaining about the actions of the Head Teacher

1) Informal stage

The complainant is usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Head Teacher. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. If the matter is not resolved, if both parties agree, then a third party may be invited to act as a mediator at a further meeting. It is important that the complainant makes an attempt at an informal resolution, otherwise the Chair of the Governing Body may decide not to progress the complaint any further.

2) Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the **Chair of the Governing Body** who will determine which of the agreed procedures to invoke. If it is determined that the complaint is "General", the Chair will arrange for its investigation. It is important that the matter is not discussed with any other member of the Governing Body, as this may jeopardise an investigation.

The complainant should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, copies of relevant documents etc. In addition the complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint.

The Chair will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may include the interviewing of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information.