



Johnstown Community Primary School



Complaints Policy

Adopted by FGB 03/12/2012

Revised March 2015



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Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Johnstown Primary School is committed to dealing effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible we will put right any mistakes we have made and we will apologise. We aim to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve what we do.
- 1.2 Our definition of a complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school or a member of its staff that requires a response from the school.'
- 1.3 This complaints procedure supports our commitment and is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the school can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion.

2. When to use this procedure

- 2.1 When you have a concern or make a complaint we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by the school, in which case we will tell you who to complain to. At other times you may be concerned about matters that are handled by other procedures, in which case we will explain to you how your concern will be dealt with.
- 2.2 If your concern or complaint is about another body as well as the school (for example the local authority) we will work with them to decide how to handle your concern.

3. Have you asked us yet?

- 3.1 If you are approaching us for the first time you should give us a chance to respond. If you are not happy with our response then you may make your complaint using the procedure we describe below. Most concerns can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in school, without the need to use a formal procedure.

4. What we expect from you (Appendix C)

- 4.1 We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. But school staff and governors have the same right. We expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour. We will also not tolerate unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence or vexatious complaining. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable (Appendix D).

5. Our approach to answering your concern or complaint

- 5.1 We will consider all your concerns and complaints in an open and fair way.
- 5.2 At all times the school will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information. Our policy requires complainants to do the same.
- 5.3 Timescales for dealing with your concerns or complaints may need to be extended by agreement between both parties.
- 5.4 We may ask for advice from the local authority or diocesan authority where appropriate.
- 5.5 Some types of concern or complaint may raise issues that have to be dealt with in another way (other than this complaints policy), in which case we will explain why this is so, and will tell you what steps will be taken.
- 5.6 The governing body will keep the records of documents used to investigate your concern or complaint for seven years after it has been dealt with. Records will be kept in school and reviewed by the governing body after seven years to decide if they need to be kept for longer.
- 5.7 Complaints that are made anonymously will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 5.8 Where complaints are considered to have been made only to cause harm or offence to individuals or the school, the governing body will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including the reasons for 'no action'.

6. Answering your concern or complaint

- 6.1 The chart in Appendix A shows what may happen when you make a complaint or raise a concern. There are up to three Stages: A, B and C. Most complaints can be resolved at Stages A or B. You can bring a relative or companion to support you at any time during the process but you will be expected to speak for yourself. However, we recognise that when the complainant is a pupil it is reasonable for the companion to speak on their behalf and/or to advise the pupil.
- 6.2 As far as possible, your concern or complaint will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there could be occasions when the person

dealing with your concern or complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about your concern or complaint, so as to address it appropriately.

- 6.3 If you are a pupil under 16 and wish to raise a concern or bring a complaint we will ask for your permission before we involve your parent(s) or carer(s). If you are a pupil under 16 and are involved in a complaint in any other way, we may ask your parent(s) or carer(s) to become involved and attend any discussion or interview with you.

Stage A

- 6.4 If you have a concern, you can often resolve it quickly by talking to a teacher, the Headteacher or the Clerk to Governors if your complaint is about the Headteacher. You should raise your concern as soon as you can; normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 school days of any incident. The longer you leave it the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.
- 6.5 If you are a pupil, you can raise your concerns with your school council representative or a teacher chosen to deal with pupil concerns (as appropriate for the school). This will not stop you, at a later date, from raising a complaint if you feel that the issue(s) you have raised have not been dealt with properly.
- 6.6 We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern normally within 10 school days, but if this is not possible, we will talk to you and agree a revised timescale with you.
- 6.7 The person overseeing your concern or complaint will keep you informed of the progress being made. This person will also keep a log of the concern for future reference.

Stage B

- 6.8 In most cases, we would expect that your concern is resolved informally. If you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing to the headteacher.
- 6.9 We would expect you to aim to do **this within five school days of receiving a response to your concern as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible**. There is also a form attached (**Appendix B**) that you may find useful. If you are a pupil we will explain the form to you, help you complete it and give you a copy.

- 6.10 If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should put your complaint in writing to the chair of governors, addressed to the school, to ask for your complaint to be investigated.
- 6.11 In all cases, the Clerk to Governors can help you to put your complaint in writing if necessary.
- 6.12 If you are involved in any way with a complaint, the Clerk to Governors will explain what will happen and the sort of help that is available to you.
- 6.13 The Clerk to Governors will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. Timescales for dealing with your complaint will be agreed with you. We will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, normally within 10 school days of receiving your letter. The school's designated person will complete the investigation and will let you know the outcome in writing within 10 school days of completion.

Stage C

- 6.14 It is rare that a complaint will progress any further. However, if you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write, through the school's address, to the chair of governors setting out your reasons for asking the governing body's complaints committee to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down details of your whole complaint again.
- 6.15 If you prefer, instead of sending a letter or e-mail, you can talk to the Chair of Governors who, together with the Clerk to Governors will write down what is discussed and what, in your own words, would resolve the problem. We would normally expect you to do this within five school days of receiving the school's response. You will be asked to read the notes or will have the notes read back to you and then be asked to sign them as a true record of what was said. We will let you know how the complaint will be dealt with and will send a letter to confirm this. The complaints committee will normally have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receiving your letter.
- 6.16 The letter will also tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered by the complaints committee must be received. Everyone involved will see the evidence and documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected. The letter will also record what we have agreed with you about when and where the meeting will take place and what will happen. The timescale may need to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of evidence or seeking advice. In this case, the person dealing with the complaint will agree a new meeting date with you.

- 6.17 Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule the meeting more than once, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.
- 6.18 We will write to you within 10 school days of the meeting explaining the outcome of the governing body's complaints committee's consideration.
- 6.19 We will keep records of all conversations and discussions for the purpose of future reference and review by the full governing body. These records will be kept for a minimum of seven years.
- 6.20 The governing body's complaints committee is the final arbiter of complaints. There is no appeal process.

7. Special circumstances

- 7.1 Where a complaint is made about any of the following the complaints procedure will be applied differently.

i. A governor or group of governors

The concern or complaint will be referred to the chair of governors for investigation. The chair may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

ii. The chair of governors or headteacher and chair of governors

The vice chair of governors will be informed and will investigate it or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

iii. Both the chair of governors and vice chair of governors

The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the chair of the complaints committee. Stage C of the complaints procedure will then apply.

iv. The whole governing body

The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the headteacher, chair of governors, local authority and, where appropriate, the diocesan authority. The authorities will usually agree arrangements with the governing body for independent investigation of the complaint.

v. The headteacher

The concern or complaint will be referred to the chair of governors who will undertake the investigation or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

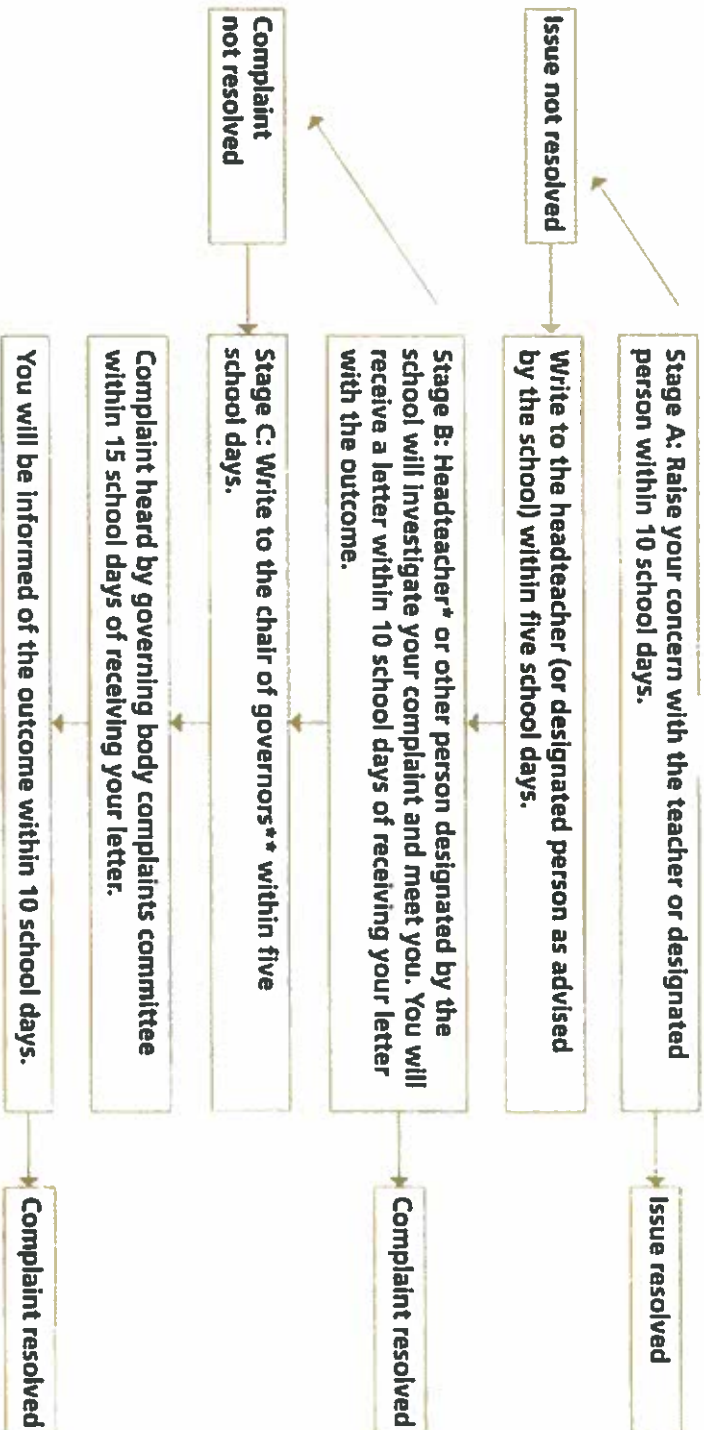
- 7.2 In all cases the school and governing body will ensure that complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open and fair way.

8. Our commitment to you

- 8.1 We will take your concerns and complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.
- 8.2 If you need help to make your concerns known we will try and assist you. If you are a young person and need extra assistance the Welsh Government has established MEIC which is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- 8.3 The governing body has consulted with staff on this policy and will consult further if any amendments are made in the future.

Appendix A: Summary of dealing with concerns or complaints

Appendix A: Summary of dealing with concerns or complaints
 This procedure will be followed in the event of a concern or complaint about the school, provided that the concern or complaint does not fall under other statutory procedures.



• If the complaint is about the headteacher you should write to the chair of governors.
 •• If the complaint is about the chair of governors you should write to the vice chair.
 All timescales shown are targets and are flexible; however it is in everyone's best interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.
 The school will work with you to ensure that the time allowed to deal with your concern or complaint is reasonable and helps to achieve an answer to the problem.



Appendix B: Model complaint form

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else please fill in Section B also. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned. If you are a pupil the school will help you complete this form, will explain it to you and will give you a copy of it when it is completed.

A. Your details

Surname

Forename(s)

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/other

Address and postcode

Daytime phone number

Mobile phone number

e-mail address

How would you prefer us to contact you?

B. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, what are their details?

Their name in full

Address and postcode

What is your relationship to them?

Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?

C. About your complaint (continue your answers on separate sheets of paper if necessary)

C.1 Name of the school you are complaining about.

C.2 What do you think they did wrong or did not do?

C.3 Describe how you have been affected.

C.4 When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.5 If it is more than three months since you first became aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before.



C.6 What do you think should be done to put matters right?

C.7 Have you already put your complaint to a member of staff?
If so, please give brief details about how and when you did so.

Signature of complainant:

Date:

**Signature if you are making a complaint on behalf
of someone else**

Signature:

Date:

Please send this form and any documents to support your
complaint to:

[Insert name of complaint handler]

[Insert address and contact details of complaint handler]

Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Complaints procedures
for school governing
bodies in Wales

Guidance document no
011/2012

Date of issue:
October 2012

Appendix C

Expectations of the Complainant

- (i) The complainant should cooperate by describing their complaint in detail. Complainants should provide specific information which can be investigated and considered.
- (ii) Complaints should be made promptly. It is not reasonable for people to make complaints a long time after the event. A complainant should make their complaint within 10 school days. However, complaints which trigger safeguarding/child protection investigations should still be looked at even if this timescale has been exceeded.
- (iii) It is reasonable to expect a complainant to attend meetings if reasonable notice is given and the meeting time and location takes reasonable account of the complainant's other commitments. That should mean being prepared to meet at the start or end of the 9a.m.–5p.m. working day if that suits the complainant best. If arrangements are not convenient, an alternative should be offered. Complainants will usually be given at least one week's notice of meetings, however, complainants are expected to be mindful of governors' work and family commitments too.
- (iv) Aggressive, abusive or unreasonable demands, behaviour or unreasonable persistence (see Appendix D) by complainants should not be tolerated. Persistent complainants who have no substance for their complaints may be considered to be behaving unreasonably and told, in writing, that their complaint will not be considered.
- (v) If complainants do not meet these expectations at any stage of the complaints procedure, then schools are entitled to not consider their complaints. This will be explained to the complainant in writing and a record kept by the school.

Appendix D

Definitions of Unacceptable Behaviour

Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

- (i) Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.
- (ii) Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness. It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour.
- (iii) We expect our staff to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. School staff and governors understand the difference between aggression and anger. The anger felt by many complainants involves the subject matter of their complaint. However, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards school staff and governors.

Unreasonable Demands

- (i) Complainants may make what are considered to be unreasonable demands on the school office through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the complainant.
- (ii) Examples of actions grouped under this heading include demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, continual phone calls or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- (iii) These demands are considered unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the office, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of other complainants or functions.

Unreasonable Persistence

- (i) It is recognised that some complainants will not or cannot accept the outcome of the complaint. Complainants may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their complaint or contact the office persistently about the same issue.
- (ii) Examples of actions grouped under this heading include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what this office can or cannot do and continuing to pursue a complaint without presenting any new information. The way in which these complainants approach the school staff or governors may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.
- (iii) The actions of persistent complainants are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what the school or governors regard as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources.