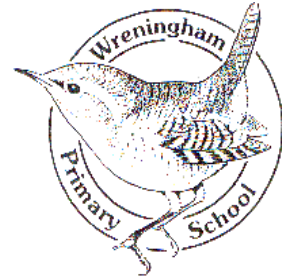


Together Everyone Achieves More

Wreningham School is committed to Safeguarding
And promoting the Welfare of children



Wreningham VC Primary

1 Corinthians 12:12, "There is one body but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body."

Complaints Policy

All policies at Wreningham VC Primary School should be taken as part of the overall strategy of the school and implemented within the context of our vision, aims and values as a Church of England School

Reviewed Spring term 2024

Next Review Date Spring term 2026

This policy was approved by the Governing Body 18/3/24

All schools want their children to be healthy, happy, safe, and to achieve. At Wreningham VC Primary School we recognise parents and carers play an important part in making this happen. Cooperation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in the school. This ambition is reflected in our school vision - **‘Working together so that everyone in our school feels safe, confident and happy, curious to learn and able to achieve their very best within our Christian community.’**

General Principles:

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services it provides.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible to enable a proper investigation. **In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, will not be considered.**
- Issues need to be dealt with by parents, carers or guardians and a school as calmly, courteously and as quickly as possible.

It is important the school keeps a written record of any formal meetings that take place regarding an issue or complaint.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’*.

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

Procedure for handling concerns or raising a complaint

Each stage of the procedure set out below offers the opportunity for concerns and complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Stage 1 – Informal

Parents or carers should in the first instance, make an appointment to speak to the class teacher about the concern. It is best to resolve issues at this point.

Guidance on informal stage 1

- *Concerns should initially be handled informally in a manner that offers the best way of resolving issues.*
- *A class teacher should offer an appointment to discuss the issue as quickly as possible, as this will give both parties time to talk about it calmly and politely without being interrupted. This can allow parties to remain calm. It will also show a commitment to resolving issues.*
- *It is important for parents to recognise that schools are busy organisations and that it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away.*
- *The parties involved should be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.*

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it may be appropriate to address the Chair of the Governing Body directly via the school office, with the complaint in a sealed envelope marked urgent, private, and confidential.

Stage 2 – Informal

If parents believe the concern or complaint is not resolved with the class teacher, they should ask for an appointment to meet with the headteacher or if appropriate, the Senior Teacher. It is often the case that both the Headteacher and Senior Teacher will be present at any meeting. The Headteacher will be responsible for ensuring the complaint is investigated appropriately and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution. A written record will be made of any meeting that takes place with details such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, being made (using a Parents Meeting Record Sheet).

The Headteacher may feel that a particular governor’s input would be helpful in bringing about a resolution but there is no obligation on any governor to become involved at this stage.

Guidance on informal stage 2

- *It is in everyone’s interest, particularly the child, for concerns and complaints to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.*
- *The aim should be that discussions end on a positive note with no bad feeling.*
- *It is good practice for headteacher or senior teacher to share the parents Meeting Record Sheet summarising what has been agreed regarding the issue.*

It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved by now.

Stage 3 – Formal (complaint letter to headteacher)

An issue that has not been resolved through the informal stage can become an official complaint.

Parents, or carers wishing to move to stage 3 must put the complaint in writing to the headteacher.

Parents, or carers wishing to move to the formal stage must write to the Headteacher and pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope, to the school office, addressed to the Headteacher (or the Chair of the Governing Body as appropriate). A Complaint Form is provided to assist parents (Appendix 1).

The letter will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the complainant considers the issue to be unresolved. It is very important that it includes a clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like the school to take to resolve their concern.

The headteacher should offer a resolution to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of receipt of the letter.

Guidance on stage 3- formal:

- *An issue that has not been resolved through the informal levels 1 and 2 can become an official complaint. This is a serious step to be taken. In consideration of future home/school relationships everyone concerned will need to negotiate an agreement and concentrate on finding a resolution to the issue.*

Headteachers should consider the complaint and discuss a resolution with the complainant. The headteacher should offer a resolution to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of receipt of the letter.

Concerns or complaints specifically about the headteacher

It is important to note that the decision the Headteacher has made as a result of the complaint does not become a complaint about the Headteacher. If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved, he/she should put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors asking them to investigate.

If the concern or complaint is specifically about the headteacher and is unable to be resolved at the informal stage, then it will be necessary for the complainant to formally complain to the Chair of Governors. The school will provide the Chair of Governor's name and the complainant should write to him or her at the school address marking the envelope 'urgent, private and confidential'. The Chair of Governors should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of receipt and can contact a Governor Support Service Officer for advice.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant will be informed in writing of its conclusion. *The Headteacher (or Chair) may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify their concerns and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution.*

Stage 4 - Formal complaint requesting a Governors' Complaints Panel

If the complainant feels the issue has not been resolved they should proceed to stage 4, a Governors' Complaints Panel.

A Complaints Form should be completed and sent to the Clerk, indicating a Stage 4 Complaint, in a sealed envelope marked 'Urgent, Private and Confidential' via the School Office. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing.

This formal complaint must be received within 10 school days of the last meeting with the Headteacher concerning the issue. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The letter will need to set out the complaint that has previously been formally discussed with the Headteacher and show why the matter is not resolved.

Timescales for Governors' Complaints Panel

Receipt of complainant's letter	Acknowledgement within 5 school days
Receipt of complainant's letter	Governors' Panel meeting within 15 school days (unless this goes into school holidays)
Written documentation sent to Governors' Panel Members and complainant and Headteacher	5 school days before meeting.
Governors' Panel members decision communicated to all concerned	As soon as possible but within 10 school days of meeting.

Before the meeting:

The clerk will acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within 5 school days of its receipt and arrange for a panel of governors to meet within 15 school days. It must be recognised that if the letter is received within 14 school days to the end of term it may not be possible to organise the governors' panel meeting. In this case the matter should be dealt with within 10 school days of the school reopening.

The Headteacher should be given a copy of the complainant's letter and written documentation should be requested from the school. The clerk should send both the complainant's letter and the school documentation to the Governors' Complaints Panel members, complainant and Headteacher (and anyone else involved in the meeting) at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The Headteacher will be invited to attend the Governor's Complaints Panel meeting to give a verbal statement in support of their documentation.

The committee will not review any *new* complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

At the meeting:

The Complaints Panel must be made up of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. and a clerk. If there are fewer than three governors from the school available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee.

Although this is a formal meeting, every effort will be taken to make it as informal as possible for all concerned.

The chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel should open the meeting stating the purpose and the format of the meeting to clarify this to all in attendance. People present should introduce themselves stating their reason for being at the meeting.

An independent clerk will attend to take notes, but will take no formal part in the meeting.

The Chair of the panel will request a **short** verbal statement from the complainant in support of their written complaint. The Chair of the panel will then request a short verbal statement from the Headteacher in response. Panel members may ask questions of both parties to make sure they fully understand the issues. The Chair of the panel will make sure that both the complainant and the Headteacher have had the opportunity to provide all relevant information.

After the complainant and Headteacher (or his representative) have provided all the information they wish, the chair will ask all parties to leave except the panel members and the clerk.

After the meeting:

After the meeting, the panel will discuss the issues in private, and with the assistance of the clerk, will produce a written report of findings and recommendations.

The Governors' Complaints Panel will write to all concerned within 10 school days to explain their decision and suggest a resolution to the problem, if appropriate. The decision of the Governor's Complaints Panel is final.

The decision of the Governors' Complaints Panel will not be investigated. If, however, the complainant feels that the School and Governors have not followed the school's complaints procedure correctly, he/she can contact a Children's Services for assistance.

Unreasonable Complaints

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;

- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively, using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false or using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Please complete this form and return it to the school office or to the Headteacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):
.....

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):
.....

Your Address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

E-mail address:

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc...), to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.
Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

School use:

Date Form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:			
Date:			

