



The Federation of Tavernspite and Templeton CP Schools



Complaints Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

At Tavernspite and Templeton Schools, we are committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment where children, families, staff and the wider community feel valued, respected and listened to. We recognise the importance of positive relationships between home and school and believe that effective communication is essential in maintaining trust and confidence within our school community.

We welcome feedback from parents, carers, pupils, staff and visitors as it helps us to reflect on our practice, celebrate what we do well and identify areas where we can continue to improve. Occasionally, concerns or complaints may arise, and we are committed to dealing with these fairly, sensitively and as quickly as possible.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- ☐ concerns and complaints are handled consistently, openly and transparently;
- ☐ everyone understands the process for raising and responding to concerns;
- ☐ complaints are investigated thoroughly and fairly;
- ☐ appropriate action is taken where improvements are identified;
- ☐ relationships between the school and its community are maintained wherever possible.

We recognise that raising a concern or complaint can sometimes feel difficult. We therefore aim to create a culture where people feel confident to share concerns at an early stage, knowing that they will be listened to and treated respectfully.

It is important to remember that many concerns can be resolved quickly through informal discussion with the appropriate member of staff. Early communication is often the most effective way of preventing misunderstandings from becoming more serious issues.

This policy applies to complaints made by parents, carers, pupils, members of the community and others who have a connection with the school.

2. The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

To ensure that issues are dealt with appropriately, it is important to distinguish between a **concern** and a **complaint**.

A Concern

A concern is an expression of worry, uncertainty or dissatisfaction about an issue where a person is seeking clarification, reassurance or support.

Examples may include:

- ☐ a question about a school procedure;
- ☐ a misunderstanding that needs clarification;
- ☐ a request for further information;
- ☐ a concern about a child's experience that may be resolved through discussion.

Concerns are usually best addressed informally and promptly by speaking with the relevant member of staff.

A Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken, a lack of action, or a decision made by the school, a member of staff, a pupil or the governing body.

A complaint may relate to:

- ☐ the services or facilities provided by the school;
- ☐ the actions or behaviour of staff;
- ☐ the actions or behaviour of pupils;
- ☐ decisions or actions taken by the governing body.

All complaints will be taken seriously and will be dealt with fairly, respectfully and in line with the procedures outlined within this policy.

3. Matters Covered by Separate Procedures

Whilst this policy covers the majority of complaints received by the school, some matters are governed by separate statutory processes and cannot be dealt with through this complaints procedure.

These include:

- ☐ decisions relating to school admissions;
- ☐ pupil exclusions;
- ☐ special educational needs and additional learning needs provision;
- ☐ complaints relating to the curriculum, including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE);
- ☐ religious education and collective worship;
- ☐ allegations relating to child protection or safeguarding;
- ☐ staff grievance, disciplinary or capability matters;
- ☐ complaints regarding individual staff members where a formal employment process is required.

Where a concern falls under a different procedure, the school will explain this clearly and provide information about the appropriate route for raising the matter.

Safeguarding concerns will always be dealt with in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and statutory responsibilities.

4. Our Approach to Handling Concerns and Complaints

At Tavernspite and Templeton Schools, we will always aim to resolve concerns and complaints in a positive, solution-focused manner.

When responding to a concern or complaint, we will:

- ☐ listen carefully and ensure we fully understand the issue being raised;
- ☐ treat everyone involved with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- ☐ investigate matters fairly and objectively;
- ☐ gather relevant information and consider all available evidence;
- ☐ provide clear explanations about decisions that have been made;
- ☐ keep complainants informed throughout the process;
- ☐ identify appropriate actions or improvements where necessary.

Different complaints require different responses. Some matters may be resolved quickly through a conversation with a member of staff, while more complex issues may require a formal investigation.

We will always aim to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. However, where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the matter is considered more serious, the formal stages of this complaints procedure are available.

We ask that all members of our school community work with us positively throughout the process. This includes:

- ☐ providing clear information about the concern being raised;
- ☐ responding to requests for meetings or information;
- ☐ treating staff and governors respectfully;
- ☐ maintaining confidentiality and avoiding discussion of individual complaints on social media or in public forums.

Aggressive, threatening, discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards staff, governors, pupils or other members of the school community will not be tolerated. Where behaviour becomes inappropriate, the school may need to pause communication or take further action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those involved.

5. The Complaints Process Overview

Our complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage A – Informal Resolution

Most concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly through an informal discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

Parents and carers are encouraged to initially contact the class teacher, relevant member of staff or senior leader who will listen to the concern and work towards finding a suitable resolution.

The school will aim to respond to informal concerns within **10 school days**, wherever possible.

Stage B – Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, or if the matter is more serious, a formal complaint may be made to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will:

- ☐ acknowledge receipt of the complaint;
- ☐ investigate the issues raised;
- ☐ meet with relevant individuals where appropriate;
- ☐ consider all available evidence;
- ☐ provide a written response explaining the outcome.

The school will normally aim to respond within **10 school days**, although more complex investigations may require additional time. If this is necessary, the complainant will be informed.

Stage C – Formal Complaint to the Governing Body

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage B, the matter may be referred to the Governing Body.

A Complaints Committee, consisting of governors who have had no previous involvement in the complaint, will consider the evidence and reach a decision.

The committee will:

- ☐ review the complaint and evidence presented;
- ☐ provide an opportunity for the complainant and school representatives to explain their views;
- ☐ consider whether the school's procedures have been followed appropriately;
- ☐ provide a written outcome explaining its decision.

The decision of the Governing Body Complaints Committee represents the final stage of the school's complaints process.

Where a complainant believes that the governing body has not followed the correct procedure, advice may be sought from the Local Authority. However, the Local Authority cannot overturn the decision of the governing body.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect and courtesy
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- ☐ sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- ☐ interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- ☐ consideration of records and other relevant information
- ☐ analysing information
- ☐ liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Complaints Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so. No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in

the child/young person's best interests.

7. Complaints from Pupils

At Tavernspite and Templeton Schools, we believe that children and young people should have a voice and feel confident that their views, opinions and concerns will be listened to.

Pupils can raise concerns or complaints about aspects of school life that affect them. These may include:

- ☐ relationships with other pupils;
- ☐ concerns about school routines or activities;
- ☐ worries about how they have been treated;
- ☐ suggestions for improving school life.

Children can speak to:

- ☐ their class teacher;
- ☐ a trusted member of staff;
- ☐ a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- ☐ another adult they feel comfortable approaching.

Where appropriate, pupils will be supported through the complaints process. This may include:

- ☐ helping them explain their concern;
- ☐ having another trusted adult present;
- ☐ ensuring they understand what will happen next;
- ☐ making sure their views are considered respectfully.

Where a pupil raises a concern that affects other pupils, the school may consider whether it is appropriate to address the matter through pupil groups such as the School Council, Criw Cymraeg, Eco Committee or other representative groups.

The school will always consider the child's age, understanding and individual circumstances when responding to pupil concerns.

8. Complaints Involving the Headteacher, Governors or Other Special Circumstances

Some complaints require alternative arrangements to ensure independence and fairness.

Complaints about the Headteacher

Where a complaint is made about the Headteacher, the complaint should be submitted to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint or may delegate responsibility to another governor who has had no previous involvement.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this stage, it will progress to Stage C and be considered by a Governing Body Complaints Committee.

Complaints about a Governor

Where a complaint is made about an individual governor, the matter will normally be referred to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair may investigate personally or delegate the investigation to another suitable governor.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair will oversee the process.

Complaints about the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors

Where a complaint involves both the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, the matter will be referred to the Clerk to the Governing Body, who will seek appropriate advice regarding the next steps.

Complaints about the Whole Governing Body

Where a complaint concerns the governing body as a whole, advice will be sought from the Local Authority to ensure the complaint is handled independently and appropriately.

9. Supporting Fair and Respectful Communication

We recognise that people may feel worried or frustrated when raising concerns, particularly when the matter relates to their child.

We are committed to listening and responding positively. Equally, all members of our school community have the right to feel safe and respected.

Meetings and conversations relating to complaints should always be conducted calmly and respectfully.

The school will not accept:

- ☐ threatening or intimidating behaviour;
- ☐ personal attacks against staff, governors or pupils;
- ☐ discriminatory comments;
- ☐ abusive language;
- ☐ unreasonable demands that prevent the school from responding effectively.

Where behaviour becomes inappropriate, the school may:

- ☐ end a meeting;
- ☐ request that future communication takes place in writing;
- ☐ restrict contact to a named member of staff;
- ☐ seek advice from the Local Authority where necessary.

This approach is intended to protect everyone involved and ensure complaints can be resolved constructively.

10. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All complaints will be treated confidentially.

Information relating to complaints will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and resolve the matter.

The school will maintain appropriate records of:

- ☐ the nature of the complaint;
- ☐ discussions and meetings held;
- ☐ evidence considered;
- ☐ actions taken;
- ☐ the final outcome.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with:

- ☐ the Data Protection Act 2018;
- ☐ UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- ☐ the school's data protection procedures.

The Governing Body will receive regular reports regarding complaints received, while ensuring that individual identities remain confidential.

The purpose of monitoring complaints is not simply to resolve individual issues, but also to identify opportunities for improving the quality of education and the experience of pupils and families.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The effectiveness of this Complaints Policy will be reviewed regularly by the Governing Body.

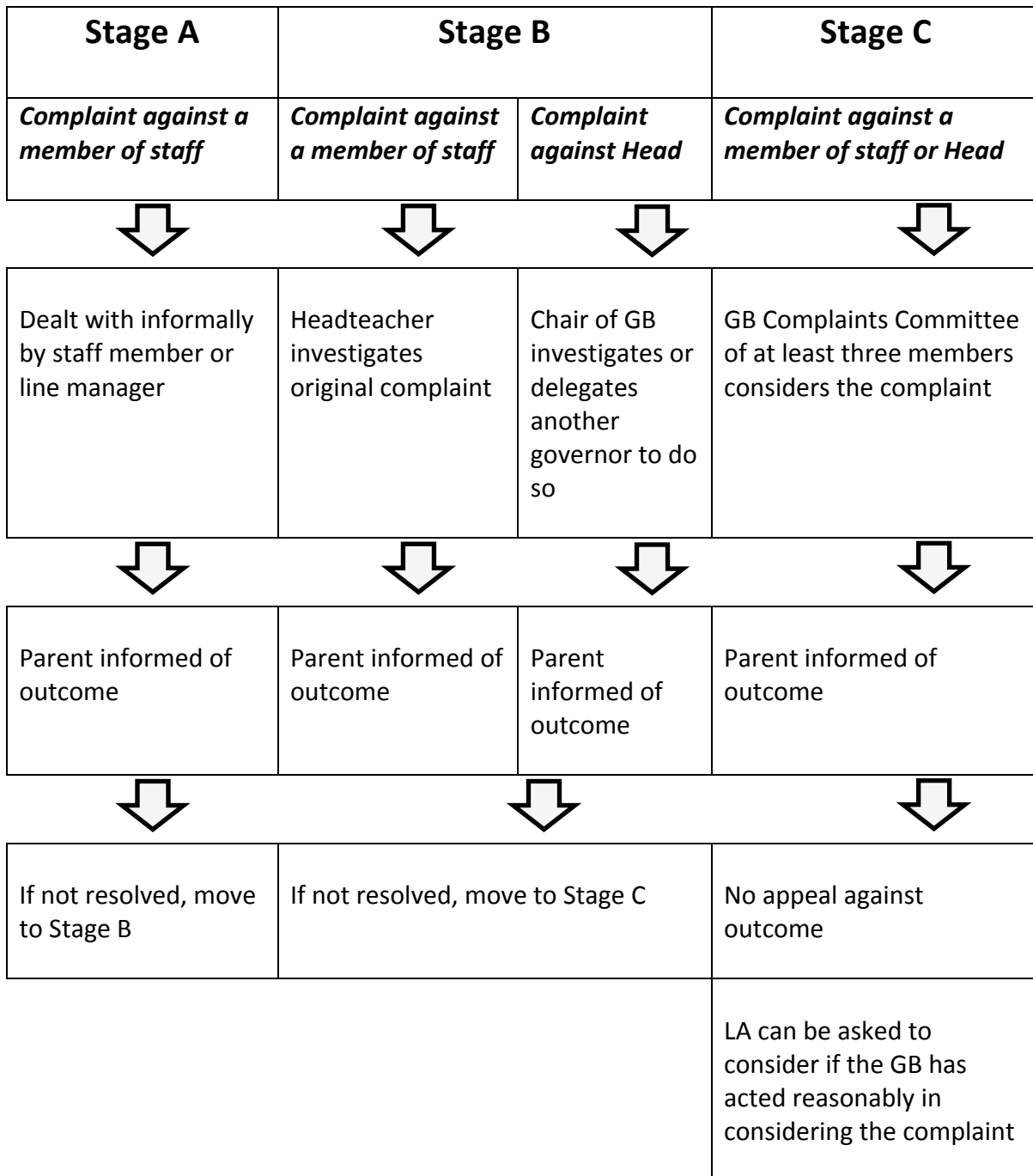
As part of this review, the school will consider:

- ☐ the number and nature of complaints received;
- ☐ the stages at which complaints were resolved;
- ☐ any recurring themes or issues;
- ☐ whether changes to school procedures are required;
- ☐ feedback from those involved.

Learning from complaints forms an important part of the school's commitment to continuous improvement.

The policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where legislation, guidance or school circumstances change.

Summary of the school's complaints procedures



Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher 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:

Appeals

Once you have been given a decision at the end of Stage C the complaints process will end. The governing body and head teacher will not look at your complaint again, even if you are unhappy with the outcome. There is no appeals process.

You can ask the local education authority (Pembrokeshire County Council) or Welsh Assembly Government to review the procedures we used to deal with your complaint. However, if we have followed the process as set out in this policy document then they will not be able to overturn the decision made.

Pembrokeshire County Council has its own published complaints policy and procedures. However, complaints relating to schools made directly to the county council will be referred back to the school to deal with.