



Complaints Policy

Calcot Infants and Junior Schools

1. Document Control

Adopted / Adopted and Adapted / Schools own: **School's own**

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Chair of Governors' signature: **Mrs Julia Kidd**

2. Change History

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2	2016 February	No changes
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4	2019 February	No changes
5	2021 June	No changes
6	2023 March	No changes

3. Website History

Version	Date on website
6	2023 March

The Calcot Schools

Complaints Policy

This document sets out the policy for dealing with comments, grievances and complaints. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Complaints Procedure.

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school
- Complaints about the school's operational arrangements

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should relate to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months.

This policy should not be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment
- Complaints about the actions of a governor
- Complaints about the actions of another parent
- Allegations of abuse
- Issues between the school and community groups/PTA

These matters will be dealt with by:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment (There is a separate staff grievance procedure)
- Complaints about the actions of a governor (This should be reported to Chairman of the Governing Body in the first instance, **and considered with reference to the West Berkshire Governors Code of Conduct**)
- Complaints about the actions of another parent (This should be reported to the Headteacher who will investigate whether action can be taken by the school)
- Allegations of abuse (Any allegations of abuse should be discussed with the Headteacher or a senior staff member in the first instance. **For a definition of abuse, refer to the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies**)
- Issues between the school and community groups/PTA (These will be resolved informally by discussion)

Status

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states the need to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services the school provides. The law also requires the complaints procedure to be publicised.

Purpose

The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders. The governing body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self-evaluation and raising standards. All stakeholders should feel that their concerns or complaints can be voiced and will be considered seriously. The school takes informal concerns seriously and aims to resolve them at the earliest stage in order to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure will not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. Staff will endeavor to resolve issues on the spot.

Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Applicability

The policy shall apply to all employees and governors of the school. It is the shared responsibility of the headteacher and the Chairman of the Governing Body to ensure that these groups are made aware of the policy and procedure.

The Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent panel **where necessary**;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of Staff Members

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Therefore all staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint. They will deal with the complaint sensibly and maturely, noting down key concerns. They will acknowledge the worry/concern of the complainant and will inform the deputy or headteacher. The staff member will resolve the complaint where it is appropriate to do so and will keep notes of any actions taken. It is good practice to follow up a complaint at a suitable time scale and check with the complainant as to whether they feel matters have improved and are appropriately resolved.

Staff members will also respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff. In such cases the complaint will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Deputy can refer the complainant to the chair of governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Deputy or Head may consider referring the complainant to another staff member.

The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

The Role of the Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher

In the Calcot Schools the Deputy and Headteacher will be aware of any complaints made to staff members and will always be available for advice and support. It is good practice for the SMT to be aware of any concerns/complaints and it is vital therefore that a written record is maintained. The SMT's commitment to listening and resolving will shape the way complaints are handled in the Calcot Schools. The headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on any action to be taken.

As part of the Calcot Schools ethos, the Deputies and Headteacher are always available to hear any concerns/complaints and will act on them quickly and effectively ensuring the complainant is fully informed at all stages. Equally, the Headteacher or deputy will ask the complainant as to what actions they think might resolve the complaint at this stage. The complainant will receive a response in writing, acknowledging their complaint and how matters will be/have been resolved. Again, it is appropriate for the Headteacher or Deputy to follow up any complaints after they have been resolved to check that all is satisfactory

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- convene a panel on receiving a complaint

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

The Role of the Clerk

West Berkshire LEA strongly recommends that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

The governing body may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at these stages, and set out its terms of reference. These can include:

- drawing up its procedures;
- hearing individual appeals;
- making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

The procedure adopted by the panel for hearing appeals is part of the school's complaints procedure. The panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three or five people. The panel may choose their own chair.

Summary of Procedures

This section of the policy is taken from the Calcot School Complaints Procedure, which explains the process in more detail.

In brief the procedure is as follows:

(Please note that a dissatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage)

Stage one: Informal

Complaint/concern heard by staff member (with SMT support if necessary) and resolved appropriately.

Stage two: Formal

- Complaint heard by headteacher or
- Complaint is heard by the Chair of Governing Body (if complaint is about the headteacher)

Stage three:

Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Panel (review);

The Complaints Policy and Procedure are publicised to all stakeholders through:

- the school prospectus;
- the information given to new parents when their children join the school;
- the home-school agreement;
- home school bulletins or newsletters;
- a specific complaints leaflet which includes a form on which a complaint can be made;
- posters displayed in areas of the school that will be used by the public, such as reception or the main entrance;
- the school website.

If, at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with Calcot Schools' legal representatives.

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

All documentation regarding complaints (including notes of any related meetings and telephone calls), the action taken and the final outcome will be recorded and a summary included in the Headteacher's next report to governors.

The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals.

The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance, and will contribute to school improvement. Any underlying issues identified will be addressed.

Record Keeping

All complaints will be responded to in writing.

At Stage 1 – even though this is an informal stage, the complainant will receive a reply in writing and a copy should be retained for reference.

At Stages 2a, 2b and 3 – there should be clear communication in writing throughout the handling of the complaint. A copy of all written communication should be retained for reference.

Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific child would be kept within the child's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of 7 years.