

**Woodbury Boston Primary
Policies and Procedures**

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES POLICY

Woodbury Boston Primary School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised.

The school aims to ensure complaints are directed to the relevant person within the school, complaints are managed positively, fairly and in a timely manner, issues are resolved effectively, and good relationships between members of the community are maintained.

In this policy and associated procedures, the following definitions are used:

Concern: An issue of interest or an expression of worry which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation

Complaint: An expression of genuine dissatisfaction or grievance, where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Dispute: An argument or disagreement between individuals

Guiding Principles

Confidentiality

The school is committed to providing a confidential complaints process. As far as possible the investigation and resolution of complaints will be limited to those people with direct involvement in the matter. Confidentiality may be limited where the law requires disclosure or there are concerns for a person's safety or wellbeing.

Respect and Fairness

All parties will have the opportunity to express their point of view in a manner which is respectful and in the interests of seeking a resolution. It is incumbent upon all parties to act with respect even in circumstances where they feel aggrieved.

Vexatious Complaints

Frivolous, malicious or vexatious complaints seriously undermine the trust necessary for successful operation of the school. Action may be taken by the school in circumstances where an individual or individuals' actions are deemed to be harmful to the school or other persons.

Last reviewed: February 2018

Endorsed by GB: February 2018

Next review due: March 2020

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES PROCEDURES

Complaints Procedure

Complaints Register

The school maintains a Complaints Register, to record details of complaints received and actioned, and to allow for any trends or recurring issues to be identified.

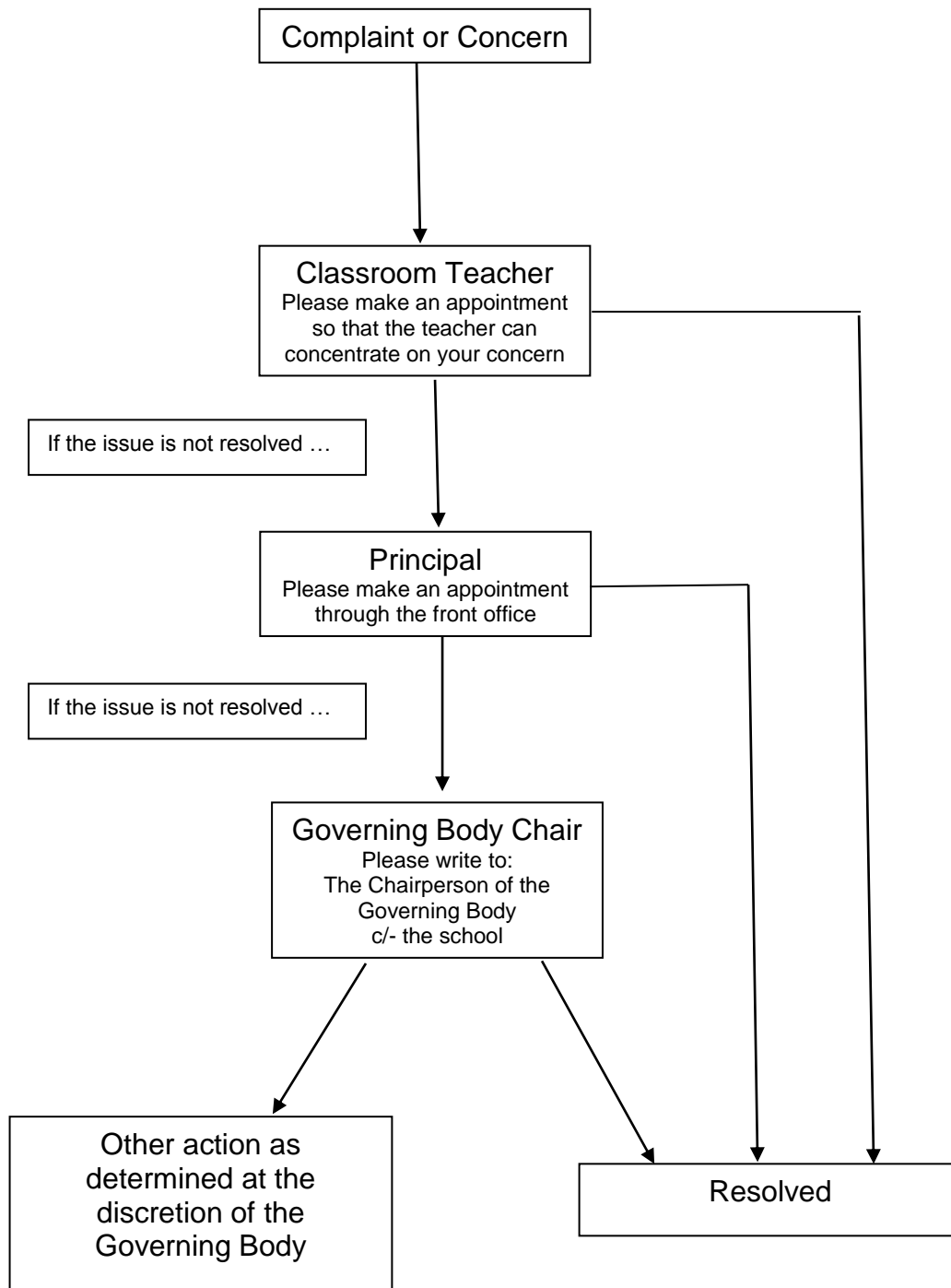
All written complaints received by the school are to be recorded in the school complaints register. Details of action and resolution are also to be recorded as appropriate. Should a verbal complaint be fully resolved immediately the complaint is made (for example during the initial conversation with the complainant,) and no further action be required, the complaint does not need to be recorded in the register. *Concerns* (as opposed to complaints) do not need to be recorded in the register, unless they become a written complaint at a later date.

Complaints Procedure

- Receive complaint, record in complaints register
- Ascertain best person to address the complaint. Most usually, this will be a classroom teacher, administration staff member or the Principal. Refer the complaint to that person (the Initial Respondent).
- Initial Respondent to acknowledge receipt of complaint as soon as possible and give a time-frame for the response.
- Initial Respondent to investigate as required, respond to the complainant within the given time-frame, and record details of action and response in the complaints register.
- All complaints are to be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Limit knowledge of the complaint to the Initial Respondent and those directly involved. The Chairperson of the Governing Body may also need to be informed.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Initial Respondent, either party may refer the complaint to the Principal (or Governing Body Chairperson if the Initial Respondent was the Principal).
- Second Respondent to examine the matter thoroughly, and then respond in writing to the complainant.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response from the Second Respondent, the matter will be referred to the Chairperson of the Governing Body
- Investigation and action by the Governing Body Chairperson or Governing Body representatives will finalise the matter unless, at the discretion of the Governing Body, alternative resolution processes are sought.
- All details, up to and including resolution, are to be recorded in the complaints register.

The Governing Body will monitor the complaints register to fulfil its governance requirements.

Complaint Flow Chart



Student Complaints

The whole school culture is one that encourages all of the students to have a voice, and to know that they will be heard, regardless of the perceived degree of seriousness of the matter they raise. This is supported by the following:

Non-Violent Communication

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) (developed by Dr Marshall B Rosenberg) is a process of communication designed to improve compassionate connection to others and is explicitly taught to staff and students at the school. While primarily used as a communication and negotiation tool, a side-bonus of the program is that children are comfortable and practiced in identifying and articulating their feelings and needs, and in making their needs known to those around them.

Parliament

Parliament is a fortnightly meeting of the whole school. It is an expression of the principles of active citizenship whereby each child is invited to be involved in discussions about school issues which affect them. At parliament, the whole school (students kindy-year six, and all available adults) gather together. Each person present is asked in turn, individually by name, if they have any great things that they would like to celebrate with everyone, or concerns or comments to share with the rest of the community. The result of this ongoing process is that even the very youngest students develop the confidence to speak up, and the knowledge that their voice will be valued and heard.

Class circles

Class circles are like mini-parliaments, conducted as needed in the classroom to address class issues.

Playground carers

Each week a few of the senior students are identified as playground carers, who will attempt to negotiate a resolution to playground matters. If this is not successful, the carer then involves a staff member. As well as giving the students ownership of the resolution of their problems, this process also helps the children learn to distinguish who is the best person to go to with a concern, depending on the nature or severity of the issue.

Keeping Safe curriculum

The school uses the Keeping Safe curriculum as part of being a child-safe organisation. This curriculum promotes a protective behaviours approach to assist students to resolve matters of concern.

Dispute Resolution

General procedure for resolving disputes

- Step 1 Meet with the other person at a mutually convenient time. Try to resolve the issue between yourselves. If unable to resolve the issue, go to step 2.
- Step 2 Write to the Principal outlining the facts as you know them and request an appointment to discuss the issue. The Principal will arrange to meet with all parties either separately and/or together as they deem appropriate. Detailed records, including agreements made, will be kept and signed by all parties and a future appointment made if need be to follow up on the agreements made. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, go to step 3.
- Step 3 Write to the Governing Body Chairperson again outlining all facts and request that the Governing Body help in reaching a resolution. Investigation and action by the Governing Body Chairperson or Governing Body representatives will finalise the matter unless, at the discretion of the Governing Body, alternative resolution processes are sought.

Parent Disputes

Follow General Procedure for Resolving Disputes

All disputes a parent has with a staff member would be brought to the Principal if unable to be resolved between the parent and staff member as per step 1. If the dispute concerns the Principal or any member of the Principal's family then the concern should be taken to the Chairperson of the Governing Body.

Parents with a complaint about a student at the school should make an appointment through the office to see the teacher of the student. If the complaint is established to be a bullying issue the matter will be referred to the Principal. **Parents should never approach or question another child about an issue.**

Parents are encouraged to attempt to settle disputes with another parent between themselves by arranging a suitable time to discuss the issue. Accusations should be avoided before all facts are known. Meetings to discuss the dispute should be private and not discussed with anyone else. The Principal can attend the meeting in the role of mediator if desired by both parties.

Staff member Disputes

Follow General Procedure for Resolving Disputes

Staff members are encouraged to attempt to settle disputes between themselves by arranging a suitable time and place to discuss the issue.