

Woodbury Boston Primary School
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: March 2019

Endorsed by GB: March 2019

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.

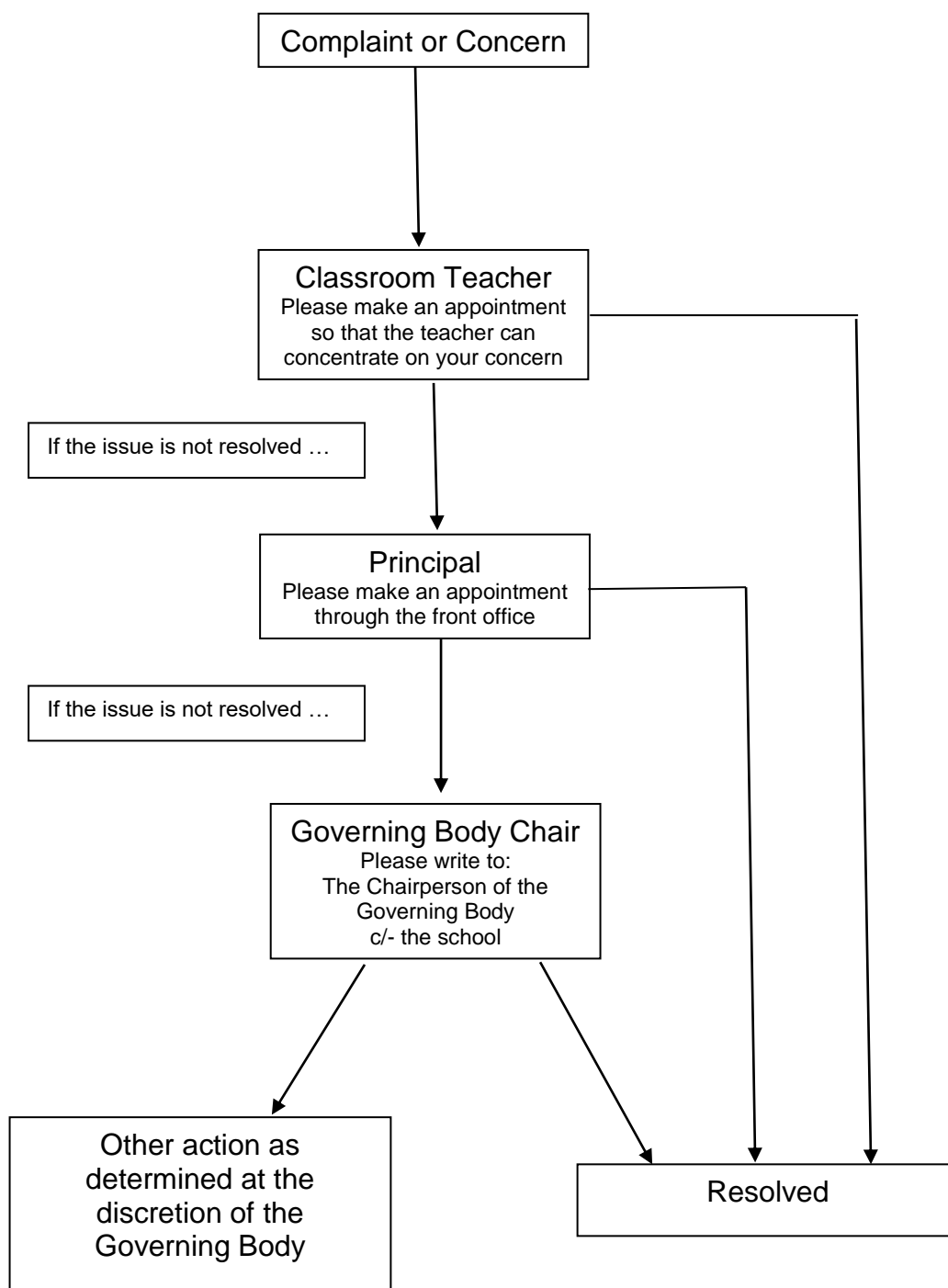
All complaints received by the school, whether received verbally or in writing, are to be recorded in the school complaints register. Details of action and resolution are also to be recorded as appropriate.

Complaints Procedure

- Receive complaint, record in complaints register. (The complaints register is maintained by administration staff. If the complaint is received by another staff member, that staff member is to convey the complaint, as soon as possible, to administration staff so that it can be recorded in the 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 and provide information regarding complaint handling process
- Initial Respondent to investigate as required, respond to the complainant 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 be informed depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 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 or the complaint is about the conduct of the Principal).
- Second Respondent to examine the matter and respond in writing to the complainant.
- If the complainant is 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.
- Details of actions and resolution of the complaint 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 school culture is one that encourages all 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.

Protective Behaviours curriculum

The school uses evidence-based protective behaviours curriculum to support student learning relevant to their developmental stage. Learning protective behaviours assists students to access appropriate help when feeling unsafe.

Child Friendly Complaints Process

Students are encouraged to raise any concerns or complaints they may have. Complaints and concerns may be raised face-to-face with school adults. This may be their classroom teacher or education assistants, or any other school adult with whom they feel comfortable. Or students may want to enlist the help of a trusted non-school adult to approach the school. Older students may prefer to use the Student Feedback form available in classrooms or the office.

The ability to raise complaints and concerns, and the available methods to do so, are explained to all students at the beginning of the school year, with regular reminders and discussions throughout the year during Parliament, class circles and general class time.

Procedure on receipt of a student complaint

- If the complaint is in writing, respond verbally to the student as soon as possible, acknowledging receipt
- If approached by the student
 - If unable to sit with the student immediately to hear their concern, explain why and follow up as soon as a suitable time is available
 - Allow the student to talk freely and listen to what is being said
 - Reassure the student, however remain conscious of limits on confidentiality
 - Explains limits of confidentiality where applicable.
- If the complaint is a disclosure of abuse including sexual abuse, or other harm, refer to the Child Protection policy for more information, including the procedure to follow for Mandatory Reporting.
- Give the student the option to choose how they will be kept informed of the investigation or resolution of the complaint
- Investigate and if possible, resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, refer to the Principal for resolution
- Ensure the student understands the outcome of the process, and how their perspectives have informed this outcome.
- Where applicable, ensure the complaint and resolution is recorded in the school complaints register.

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 should 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. Where necessary the matter may 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.

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.