

Lowé's Wong Infant School Complaints Policy

1. Initial concerns

It is important to take informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. It is hoped that concerns can be resolved without recourse to formal procedures. It is helpful for staff to try to resolve issues on the spot including apologising where necessary.

Concerns should be taken initially to the staff member concerned.

2. Formal procedures

Formal procedures will need to 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.

Except in circumstances where she/he is the subject of the complaint, the Headteacher is the complaints co-ordinator. If the Headteacher cannot be the complaints co-ordinator, the complaint should be taken to the Chair of Governors.

The complainant will complete a complaint form and hand it to the complaints co-ordinator who will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Contact the complainant to clarify what he/she feels would resolve the issue
- Interview those involved in the matter, allowing them to be accompanied, if they so wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind
- Be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview
- Attempt to resolve the complaint, clarify misunderstandings & identify areas of agreement between the parties

NB. An admission that the school might have handled the situation better is not an admission of negligence.

The procedure will be conducted as quickly as possible, preferably within five working days.

The final outcome will be recorded, agreed by both parties and held by the Headteacher. The Governing Body will be informed of the complaint and the outcome but where possible individuals' names will be withheld.

3. Difficult complaints

This term covers complaints making reference to:-

- Child protection
- Allegations against staff
- Staff disciplinary matters

Where a complaint includes reference to any of the above, the Chair of Governors should seek advice from the local area officer.

Lowé's Wong Infant School Complaint Form

Please complete & return the form to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt & explain what action will be taken. If your complaint involves the Headteacher, please return the form to the Chair of Governors.

Your Name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

School Complaints Procedure

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:

Lowe's Wong Infant School Complaints Procedure

Flowchart

Summary of Dealing with Complaints

Complaint heard by staff member

- Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

Complaint heard by Headteacher

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint
- Write to complainant with outcome of investigation
- Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

Governor's complaints panel meeting arranged

- Issue letter inviting complainant to meeting
- Issue letter confirming panel decision
- Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

A complainant may take the complaint to a Governing Body Appeal Panel if he/she remains dissatisfied at the end of the initial procedure or if the complaint concerns the conduct of the Headteacher or of a Governor. The Chair or a nominated Governor will convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel.

It is important that the panel consists of at least three governors who:-

- are not directly involved with the complaint
- are not the subject of the complaint
- are able to meet within five working days of the Governing Body being approached
- have not been involved in the issue previously

All Governors except the Headteacher are eligible for the panel subject to the above conditions.

The complainant should write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint.

The panel will meet in private with the complainant and with any member of staff involved. The panel will ensure that the complainant does not feel too nervous or inhibited, and that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The tone of the hearing should be not adversarial and the appeal should be, and should be seen to be, independent and impartial.

The aim of the hearing will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

The panel may:-

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

To be able to reach a decision the panel will give each side the opportunity to state the case and ask questions. Any written material will be available to all parties.

The Chair of the panel will ensure that the complainant is notified, in writing, within three working days, of the panel's decision. The letter will explain if there are any further rights of appeal.

Clerking

The school office will provide the clerking for the Governing Body Appeal panel.

The clerk will confirm the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that these are convenient to all parties. The clerk will inform those concerned that any documentation that they wish to present to the panel must be returned to the clerk no later than five working days before the meeting takes place.

The clerk will collate any written materials and send them to the parties in advance of the hearing. The clerk will record the proceedings and will communicate the panel's decision to all parties.

The Chair of the panel will normally be the Chair of Governors except where he/she is involved in the issue or is unavailable. The Chair of the panel will ensure the proceedings are conducted properly in accordance with guidelines set out above. The checklist for a panel hearing is included in this policy.

Lowe's Wong infant School Complaints Procedure

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible
- witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses
- the complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken
- the Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses
- the complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken
- the panel may ask questions at any point
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint
- the Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint
- both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues
- the Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale

The running order of the meeting

- the chair introduces all parties and explains the principles, objectives and format of the meeting
- the complainant is given the opportunity to present the complaint, followed by the witnesses
- the Headteacher and panel may question the complainant and witnesses after each has spoken
- the Headteacher has the opportunity to explain the school's action, response, interpretation or view. This is followed by the school's witnesses
- the complainant is given the opportunity to sum up the complaint or give a final statement.
- the Headteacher is given the opportunity to sum up or give a final statement
- the meeting will be concluded by the chair, who should explain that the panel will consider its decision and write to both parties within the publicised timeline informing them of the outcome
- both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues

After the meeting

Both parties should leave the room while governors come to a decision.

The Complaints Committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and will reach a unanimous or majority decision. This can be:

- to dismiss the complaint in whole or in part (reasons for this decision must be clearly stated)
- to uphold the complaint in whole or in part (if the complaint is upheld, the Complaints Committee must decide on the appropriate action to be taken)

Recording Complaints

It is important that all complaints are recorded. The following procedure is recommended:

- the school must record the progress of a complaint and the final outcome
- the school must record whether the complaint is made in person, by telephone or in writing
- at the end of a meeting or telephone call, the complainant and the school should have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed
- a record of meetings and telephone calls should be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record
- these records must be held centrally by the school, this could be the role of a Complaints co-ordinator
- the minutes of any Complaints Committee meeting must be recorded