



## Concerns and Complaints Policy

Staff, Governors and parents need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints and it is important that all stakeholders are aware of the guidance on securing the swiftest and most appropriate resolution to a concern. Formal complaints follow the school Complaints Procedure.

The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision will receive the first approach. It is helpful if members of staff are able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

We acknowledge that the nature of some complaints may be emotive and may directly affect you or your family. The school staff and Governors will always be polite, professional and clear about what is happening, what can and can't happen and will seek advice from unions or governors services to ensure this process is completed in an appropriate manner. In return we also expect the same of any complainant. The school has reasonable policies on its website that covers these expectations and what may happen if this is not the case by either party. Mediation can be considered at any point in the process.

### **Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member (informal)**

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the concern will escalate and become a formal complaint requiring a formal procedure.

The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complainant can be referred to the deputy headteacher or headteacher. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, the complainant should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the member of staff can refer the complaint to the deputy headteacher or headteacher. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors are not advised to act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

### **Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Head Teacher (informal)**

The headteacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. It is not too late at this stage to suggest mediation and resolve informally.

### **Stage Three: School Investigation (formal)**

Although this is a formal investigation into your complaint, it will still be in the spirit of quickly reaching an effective outcome and maintaining positive and productive relationships. This stage is reached when informal steps have not resolved the concern and a formal complaint procedure is required. Complainants are required to complete a complaint template (see Appendix 1) and the complaint procedure detailed in Appledore School Complaint Procedure is applied.

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Appledore School Business Manager by hand or by email to [admin@appledore-primary.devon.sch.uk](mailto:admin@appledore-primary.devon.sch.uk) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**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:**