Poplar Primary School
Dealing with complaints

1. Introduction

1.1 Our aims
As a UNICEF Rights Respecting School, Poplar Primary School aims to establish and promote a close relationship with all parents and guardians, in the interests of the children. We recognise that children will feel more secure when they receive consistent messages from both home and school. Your views about our school are welcomed, including the expression of any serious concerns. At the same time we undertake to inform you as soon as possible about any issues of concern to the school so that we can work together to resolve them.

1.2 What we do to avoid concerns arising
At Poplar we work closely with parents in order to keep you informed of all aspects of school life. We have:

- the home school agreement
- regular parents’ evenings
- a written report for parents/guardians about your child once a year
- a weekly newsletter from the Headteacher

We do recognise however that from time to time you may have a concern that you wish to raise with the school. At Poplar we are committed to responding to a parental concern as quickly and as sensitively as possible in order to resolve the issue promptly and will do so in line with this procedure.

1.3 How we plan to improve our practice
We keep a record of all complaints so that we are informed about:

- the nature of complaints
- the time taken to resolve each complaint
- the measures adopted to resolve each complaint

The headteacher and senior staff will review this record on a regular basis, to enable consideration to be given to any underlying issues which need to be addressed by the school and the governing body.

2. Stages in the Procedure

Introduction:
Poplar is committed to:

- dealing with your concern as quickly as possible in an impartial and non-adversarial way: we would aim to respond to your complaint within 15 working days
- making sure that all your concerns are considered and that a fair investigation is undertaken when necessary
- keeping you informed of the progress of your concern especially if we need more time to investigate the complaint
- maintaining confidentiality at all times
**Stage 1: Discussion with class teacher**
It is our view that it is in everyone’s interest that any concerns are resolved at the earliest opportunity by a meeting with your child’s class teacher. We find that most issues can be satisfactorily addressed this way. Class teachers are available to meet parents/guardians, by appointment, at the beginning and end of school days.

**Stage 2: Discussion with a Member of the Senior Leadership Team**
If you feel that stage 1 has not adequately addressed your concern, or, if for whatever reason, you do not wish to discuss your complaint with the class teacher, you can make an appointment to meet with a Senior Member of Staff. The school office can advise the relevant staff member who are available to meet parents/guardians, by appointment, at the beginning and end of school days.

**Stage 3: Discussion with the Headteacher**
If you feel that stage 2 has not adequately addressed your concern, or, if for whatever reason, you do not think it appropriate to discuss your concern with the class teacher or Senior Leader you can make an appointment to meet with the Headteacher. After meeting with you the Headteacher will decide on the appropriate course of action, for example:
- to refer the matter back to the class teacher or Senior Leader for further discussion under the earlier Stages
- to agree with you a resolution to your concern
- to conduct an investigation into your concern before deciding the outcome

The Headteacher will write to you with the outcome of stage 3 once concluded.

**Stage 4: Referral to the governing body**
If you feel that stage 3 has not adequately addressed your concern then you can write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school office using the formal complaint form attached to this document. The Chair of Governors will consider your complaint and then decide on the appropriate course of action, for example:
- to meet with you
- to conduct an investigation into the concern
- to convene a panel of governors to formally hear your concern

The Chair of Governors will write to you with the outcome of stage 4 once concluded.
Stage 5: complaint heard by Governing Body’s Complaints Appeal Panel

The complainant usually needs to write to the Clerk to the Governing Body, giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel. The Chair, or if the Chair has been involved at any previous stage in the process, a nominated governor, will convene a governing body complaints panel.

The governors’ appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, 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 would normally be 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.

Stage 6: Referral to the Department for Education (DfE)

If you feel that the school has not adequately dealt with your complaint then you can refer the matter to the DfE. Making a complaint to the DfE should happen only after the Stages above have been exhausted. Complaints should be addressed to: The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at Department for Education, 2nd floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester, M1 2WD.

What will the Department for Education do?

If a complaint has exhausted the local procedures, SCU will examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. SCU also examines policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of the school.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, SCU will report them to the school and the complainant and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken.

Complaints concerning the Headteacher

If you wish to make a complaint concerning the Headteacher, and it cannot be resolved via informal discussion with the Head, then you should write to the Chair of Governors in line with Stage 4 of this procedure.
Complaints concerning the Chair of Governors/a Governor
If you wish to make a complaint concerning the Chair of Governors, or a Governor, and it cannot be resolved via informal discussion, then you should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school.

General Complaints

If you are not a parent/carer of a Poplar child and you have a complaint involving the school, please write direct to the Headteacher. If your complaint has not been resolved within the school, you can then write to The School Complaints Unit in line with Stage 6 (see above).

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