



Victoria Road Primary School

Complaints Policy

Policy written by	School
Reviewed & Agreed	November 2023
Next Review	November 2024
Head teacher	Mrs Emma Roberts
Chair of Governors	Mrs Hilary Moss

Signed: Head Teacher

Signed: Chair of Governors

Policy Audit

This quick audit will help all staff and Governors to assess whether the basics of this Policy are in place.

This Policy complies with Halton LA guidance.	YES
The Policy is available for staff at:	School Office and school website
And for parents/carers at:	School Office and school website

Writing and Reviewing Policy and Guidance

The Complaints Policy relates to other policies including:

- Managing allegations against staff
- Safeguarding Policies
- Whistle Blowing
- Code of conduct policies
- Managing Aggressive Behaviour From Parents & Visitors Policy

At Victoria Road School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

INFORMAL STAGE

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned or the Headteacher. Parents/carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a pupil, the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the pupil, in the first instance the class teacher or alternatively the Deputy Headteacher or SENCO depending on the nature of the concern. The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents/carers can ask for a copy of these notes at the end of the discussion.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complainant should make arrangements to discuss this with him/her informally first, before progressing to the next stage. In exceptional circumstances, where the complainant feels they cannot discuss the matter with the Headteacher, the complaint may move directly to Stage 2.

FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal stages:

Stage 1

If a parent/carer is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff can refer the matter to the Headteacher. This should be in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties (**appendix 1**). Where the complainant is unable to record details of their complaint in writing, alternative arrangements will be made by the school and this will be detailed by the school within the record of the meeting/complaint, along with the reasons for alternative arrangements.

The school will acknowledge receipt of any written complaint received on the school complaints form within five working days.

The Headteacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time to discuss and clarify what the issues are and what the parent/carer wants to achieve.

If the issue is complex the Headteacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within ten school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Headteacher should inform the parent/carer that this will take longer,

explaining the reasons for this and giving a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

Together all parties will seek to agree an acceptable outcome that is to the satisfaction of all parties involved. This will be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding and all parties will receive a copy.

Stage 2

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction after meeting with the Headteacher, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This should be in writing to the Chair at the school address (**appendix 1**). The Headteacher can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of any written complaint received on the school complaints form, escalated to Stage 2, within five working days.

The Chair of Governors will provide an opportunity to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time, usually within ten school days. Where this is not appropriate, or not possible, explanation for this will be given to the complainant. Alternative arrangements may be made for the Chair of Governors to discuss the matter via telephone with the complainant if more practicable. This is at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant explaining the reasons for the delay and when it is expected that the investigation will be completed. Reasons for the delay may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays.

Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction and/or Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, a complaints committee can be set up to consider the complaint.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied on receipt of the Chair of Governors report at the end of Stage 2 he/she may write to the clerk to the Governing Body (details available from the school office) within ten working days, also forwarding the original complaint form. The clerk will acknowledge receipt within five working school days and the complaint will move to Stage 3.

A Complaints Committee is a last resort.

If it is required, the Chair of Governors will appoint an investigating officer (who can be a member of the Governing body) to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers will be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial so s/he will not be a member of the associated complaints committee.

The Complaints Committee is made up of three members of the school's Governing Body, one of whom will be appointed as Chair of the Committee. Sometimes Governors need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies to ensure impartiality.

The Complaints Committee will meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the clerk to governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within five school days after the meeting, making it clear that the complaint has been "upheld", "upheld in part" or "not upheld", along with the reasons for their decision. The complainant will be invited to respond to the decision should they wish to do so. Such response must be received within ten working days.

The decision of the complaints committee is final and concludes the school-based investigations.

If a complainant feels that the school or governing body has acted unreasonably after all the stages have been exhausted they may contact:

Department for Education 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0370 000 2288 Email: info@education.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

If a complaint is not from a parent/carers of a pupil of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Headteacher, preferably in writing.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident/situation.

If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old the school will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case.

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Appendix 1

Victoria Road Primary School Complaints Form

Please complete and return to Mrs Emma Roberts (Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. If your complaint concerns the Head, please return to Mrs. J Bamber (Chair of Governors) in a sealed envelope via the School Office.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil: Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: E-Mail address:

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)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

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SCHOOL USE

Date acknowledgement sent: By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Code of conduct in dealing with complaints

All parties will:

- Speak calmly without raised voices
- Use appropriate, courteous language (never swearing or using offensive language)
- Use appropriate body-language that is non-threatening
- Never make threats or be sarcastic
- Bring the complaint to the attention of the school as promptly as possible
- Not make a complaint personal
- Not discuss a complaint on social networking sites
- Meet the requirements of the Home School Agreement.

School will:

- Treat all complaints individually
- Not take complaints personally
- Stay calm
- Not rush
- Respond as promptly as possible
- Maintain confidentiality
- Treat all complaints seriously.

This code of conduct applies to all parties involved in a complaint, at all stages. If the code is breached the following sanctions can be applied:

Member of school staff	School's disciplinary policy
Complainant	<p>Asked to provide documentation only and or communicate by telephone (at the discretion of the person leading the relevant stage) rather than face to face hearing/interviews.</p> <p>Consideration given to restricting attendance on school premises.</p>
Governor	<p>Removed from the process and replaced by the vice-chair of governors in the case of the chair or next available governor alphabetically in the case of other governors.</p>