



## **NOAH'S ARK NURSERY SCHOOLS**

### **Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Parental Complaints**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document establishes the framework within which complaints by parents will be addressed and the philosophy underpinning the framework.

#### **2.0 Definition of a complaint**

- 2.1 A complaint is an expression of significant dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school but not employed in the school about the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff employed at the school or about the standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff.
- 2.2 Complaints may be written or verbal. It is not always appropriate to ask for complaints to be put in writing as this might unnecessarily formalize the situation, resulting in the involved parties taking more defensive or entrenched positions thus making the conflict more difficult to resolve.
- 2.3 When an anonymous complaint is made it will be left the Principal's discretion to decide whether the gravity of the complaint warrants any further action.

#### **3.0 Responsibility of the school**

- 3.1 The Principal is responsible for investigation of complaints in the first instance and, if appropriate, referring complaints to members of staff to deal with.
- 3.2 While emphasis is placed upon the informal resolution of complaints, the Governing Body may be called upon to consider, resolve or adjudicate if complaints are referred to them by the Principal or by a complainant who is not satisfied with the result of the informal process.

#### **4.0 Values underpinning the process**

- 4.1 Children learn best if there is an effective partnership between school staff and parents.
- 4.2 All members of the school community are entitled to have their points of view heard.
- 4.3 Unresolved complaints might result in unhealthy conflict.

#### **5.0 Aims**

- 5.1 To ensure that all complaints are considered fully, fairly, carefully and confidentially.
- 5.2 To resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant or to issue a clear decision, which will enable the complainant, the Principal or the

Governing Body to consider how, if at all, the matter should be taken further.

## THE PROCESS

### 6.0 Introduction

- 6.1 **It is important to bear in mind that every expression of concern is not a complaint.** Discretion needs to be applied in determining whether action, over and above the normal day-by-day discussions over parental concerns, is needed. The Senior Team discuss all matters of this nature.
- 6.2 Problems and expressions of concern should be dealt with, as far as is possible, at the point of first contact. Continued dissatisfaction on the part of the parent/carer, indicates a need for upward referral.
- 6.3 Correspondence, statements and records of complaint are to be kept confidential. Note that this does not apply to the requirement for the school to provide parents and other interested parties with information about the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year, not to inspectors conducting inspections under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, or to the Secretary of State, should he/she ask for access to such records.

### 7.0 Informal stage

- 7.1 Complaints will be dealt with promptly, thoroughly and, in the first instance, on an informal basis.
- 7.2 Complaints should be dealt with at the most appropriate level. This will be determined by the nature and seriousness of the complaint. Only the Senior Team become involved in a discussion about the professional performance of a colleague. Where a member of staff feels that there should be upward referral of complaints the referral structure is given below. In the event of a complaint being made to a member of the Governing Body, the complainant should be advised to speak to the Principal or the Chair of Governors so that an attempt can be made to resolve the matter informally. Governors must not prejudice themselves by discussing the complaint as this would prevent them participating in a panel at a later stage.

#### **Referral structure:**

Class Teacher → Senior Team

- 7.3 There may be occasions where it will be appropriate to by-pass levels in the referral structure.
- 7.4 Where a teacher other than the Senior Team receives a complaint (as opposed to an expression of concern) and deals with it, the Senior Team should be notified of the complaint and how it was resolved.
- 7.5 If a matter remains unresolved despite the involvement of the Senior Team, the Principal will ask the Chair of Governors to act as a facilitator who may seek the advice of governors or other appropriate officials before initiating formal procedures.
- 7.6 If all informal channels have been exhausted and there is still dissatisfaction, the complainant should be made aware of how formal procedures can be initiated.

## **8.0 Possible outcomes at the informal stage**

- 8.1 When informal procedures have been exhausted, complainants should be informed clearly by the Principal that:
- a) The matter about which they complained has been dealt with appropriately by staff within the context of school policies and procedures
  - b) The complaint has been found by the Principal to be valid and that the Principal:
    - i) Within her responsibility for overall internal management of the school will take appropriate action within 5 days;
    - ii) Will refer the matter to the Governing Body for their consideration within 5 days.

## **9.0 Complaints made to the Governing Body**

- 9.1 In the event of a complaint being received directly by the Governing Body from a parent or another, governors should have regard to the following:
- 9.2 Any complaint to the Governing Body or a member thereof should be passed to the Principal for investigation. The Principal, if she has not already done so, should follow the informal procedure outlined above to attempt to resolve the matter and report the outcome to the complainant and details of action taken to the Chair of Governors.
- 9.3 If the Chair of the Governing Body is satisfied that the informal procedures have been exhausted and the complaint is still not resolved, he may, after further discussion with the Principal, decide to initiate the formal procedure.
- 9.4 In the event of the complaint being about the Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform the Principal of the complaint and then attempt to resolve the matter through an informal approach.
- 9.5 The complainant will be advised of the Chair of Governors conclusions as is appropriate in the spirit of section 8 above.

## **10.0 The formal procedure**

- 10.1 If informal attempts to settle the complaint have failed to satisfy the complainant, he/she should set out the complaint fully in writing and submit this to the Chair of the Governing Body.
- 10.2 The Chair of the Governing Body or a Trustee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing if the Chair is not available.
- 10.3 The Governing Body will arrange for the complaint to be heard by a panel of three Governors who have not had involvement with the matter at an earlier stage and at least one who is independent of the management and running of the school. This panel should be set up at a properly convened meeting of the full Governing Body. The panel will, where possible, reflect a cross-section of Governors, who have no direct interest or involvement in the case.
- 10.4 The Panel will be provided with copies of the complaint and all other relevant documentation.
- 10.5 At least five working days notice of the hearing by the panel will be given to all concerned.
- 10.6 All parties involved in the dispute may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend, representative or an interpreter and may call witnesses
- 10.7 The Principal (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is against the Principal) will explain what has already been done to attempt to resolve the complaint and the outcome of any investigation. Then:-
- i) The complainant will present his or her case and call any witnesses;

- ii) The panel and Principal will have the opportunity to question the complainant and witnesses;
- iii) The Principal will have the opportunity to respond to the complainant and to call witnesses if appropriate;
- iv) The panel and the complainant will have the opportunity to question the Principal and the witnesses;
- v) Both the complainant and the Principal will summarise their positions;
- vi) All but the members of the panel will withdraw while a panel decision is reached.

- 10.8 When the evidence has been fully considered and a decision made, the panel will notify the complainant and the Principal of the outcome in writing, giving an explanation of the conclusion, the reason for it, and any action taken, including details of any request made of those complained against to take particular actions in respect of the complaint. All findings and recommendations will be included. This will be done as quickly as possible but within a maximum of five working days.
- 10.9 The Governing Body should be informed at their next meeting that a complaint has been received and dealt with. Details should not be divulged to the full Governing Body as to do so would violate confidentiality.
- 10.10 Written records will be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

#### **11.0 The Ofsted Investigation and Complaints Unit**

- 11.1 If the complainant feels that the school has not addressed the complaint to his/her satisfaction, he/she may contact the Ofsted Investigation and Complaints Unit on 0300 123 1231.
- 11.2 If the complainant feels unable to approach the school at any stage of the process, he/she may contact the Ofsted Investigation and Complaints Unit on 0300 123 1231.

#### **12.0 Appeals**

- 12.1 If the complainant is unable to accept the final decision of the Governing Body Panel investigation then the school reserves the right to dissolve the partnership between the school and family.

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#### **CONCLUSION**

**The Governors and Staff of the School are committed to keeping this policy under regular review and the Governor responsible will ensure that the matters contained herein are regularly discussed and further developed to the benefit of all users.**

**Signed :**

Mr Charlie Colchester  
**Chairman of the Board of Governors**