

# Coulsdon C of E Primary School



## Complaints Policy

**The ethos of this school is to enable every child to learn and develop in a Christian environment. We ask all parents of whatever faith applying for a place here to recognise and support this ethos and its importance to the school.**

*Together, growing in mind, body & spirit*

## **Introduction**

Our school aims to provide a good education for all our pupils, and the head teacher and staff work very hard to build positive partnerships with all parents for the good of our children. If any parent has any concern relating to the school, to their child's well-being at school, or to the education their child is receiving, we encourage the parent to talk to their child's class teacher in the first instance and to the head teacher or deputy head teacher should discussion with the class teacher fail to resolve their concern. In almost all cases, parents' concerns are resolved through discussion and effective partnership between the school and the parent.

In the rare circumstance where a concern becomes more serious and has not been resolved through informal discussion and mutual understanding, the parent may wish to lodge a more formal complaint. We endeavour to be fair, open and honest, giving careful consideration to any complaint and addressing it as swiftly as possible. We will make every effort to resolve complaints through discussion and mutual understanding, and in all cases we put the interests of the child first. Whatever the complaint, it will be sensitively and discreetly handled, and parents are assured that our support and respect for them and their child will not be affected in any way.

## **The Complaints Process**

All complaints will be addressed in accordance with procedures set out by the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education in the publication, Parental Complaints – A Guide for schools in the Diocese of London and Southwark, March 2020. If at any stage of the process, the parent's complaint is not satisfactorily resolved, the parent will be advised on the correct procedure for taking the complaint to the next stage.

In a minority of cases, the head teacher may deem a complaint to be sufficiently serious to omit stages of the Complaints Process and refer the parent straight to the governing body.

Timescales given within the Complaints Policy are for guidance and are not a statutory requirement. The Chair of the governing body, together with the Chair of the Complaints Committee, may vary the timescales as appropriate to an individual complaint and investigation process.

### **Preliminary Stages – Informal**

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be resolved in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher considers any

such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage. If the parent is unhappy with the response to their complaint, or if the member of staff or the head teacher would like the protection of the formal procedure, the parent may be advised to put their complaint in writing and may be asked to complete a Complaints Form (Appendix 1). The school will follow the stages of procedure for formal complaints outlined below (see Stage 1).

Should a parent have a complaint about the Head Teacher, s/he should contact the Chair of the governing body, who will then investigate the matter. The Chair of governors will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint using the Complaints Form and following the procedure outlined below. Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the governing body (see Stage 2).

### **Stage 1 - Formal**

Coulsdon C of E aims to resolve concerns, difficulties and complaints in a timely manner. For the purposes of this Complaints Policy, a "school day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the school is open to children. The definition of "school day" excludes weekends, school holidays and bank holidays.

If a written complaint is received by the head teacher, it will be acknowledged within three school days and investigated, with a written response given, within ten school days of the initial complaint being received. Notes of discussions will be taken and written statements may be required. If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and a revised response date.

If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, the parent may write to the Chair of the governing body within 10 school days of receiving the head teacher's written response.

### **Stage 2 – Formal**

If the Chair of the governing body receives a written complaint from a parent s/he will consult with the head teacher before taking action. If the Preliminary Stages of the Complaints Process have not been fully pursued, the Chair may advise the complainant to follow those procedures as outlined above.

The Chair will try to acknowledge the written complaint within two school days of receipt and will aim to make a further response, following investigation, within ten school days. Assuming that all steps in the previous stage have been followed, the Chair will investigate the matter and may hold interviews with, and take written statements from, the parties involved.

If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, the parent may write to the Clerk to the governing body within 10 school days of receiving the Chair's written response, requesting that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Committee.

### **Stage 3 – Formal**

Complaints rarely reach this formal stage. However, if the Clerk to the governing body receives a request to put a complaint before the Complaints Committee of the governing body, the Clerk will set up the meeting within 20 school days, giving at least ten school days' notice of the meeting to: the members of the committee, the complainant, the head teacher, the Chair of the governing body and the Local Authority's complaints officer. The Clerk will request copies of any written papers to be considered and the names of any witnesses to be called. The Clerk will circulate all relevant documentation at least seven days prior to the meeting.

The Complaints Committee will be impartial and fair. It will comprise three governors drawn from the pool of governors appointed at the beginning of each school year to serve on staffing, pupil behaviour and complaints panels. The head teacher and the Chair of the governing body may be present for the hearing but, if previously involved in dealing with the complaint, they will be asked to withdraw along with the complainant whilst the committee discusses the evidence and draws its conclusion. The Complaints Committee will follow the guidance set out in the *Parental Complaints – A Guide for schools in the Diocese of London and Southwark, June 2017*, and the committee may take advice from the local authority and/or from the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education.

The decision and recommendations of the Complaints Committee are sent as soon as possible to all parties. The committee's decision is final.

### **Further action**

If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the Local Authority within one month of the Complaints Committee's response. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the Local Authority.

If the parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, or the Ombudsman.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The governing body will monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher will log all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

Governors will take into account any local or national decision that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if modifications are necessary within a shorter timescale.

Signed:



On behalf of the Governing Body

Date: 20-11-23 To be reviewed November 2023

### Summary of Timescales\*

Stage	Description	Response
<b>Preliminary Stage</b>	Discussions with relevant member of staff and/or Head Teacher	As soon as possible but no later than 7 school days.
<b>Formal Stages</b>		
<b>Stage 1</b>	Written complaint to Head Teacher, made within 10 school days of receipt of response from preliminary stage	Acknowledge within 3 school days. Response normally within 10 school days of the complaint being received.
<b>Stage 2</b>	Written complaint to Chair of Governors, made within 10 school days of receipt of response from previous stage	Acknowledge within 3 school days. Response normally within 10 school days.
<b>Stage 3</b>	Request for Complaints' Committee Hearing, made within 10 school days of receipt of response Chair of Governors and addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body.	Hearing set up within 20 school days with 10 days' notice of meeting. Agenda and papers sent out 7 days in advance. Decision letter within 7 school days.
<b>Further action</b>	If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the Local Authority within one month of the Complaints Committee's response.	

**\*Note:** Timescales given are for guidance and are not a statutory requirement. The Chair of the governing body, together with the Chair of the Complaints Committee, may vary the timescales as appropriate to an individual complaint and investigation process.

Please note that complaints received out of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday.



## **Coulsdon C of E Formal Complaints Form**

**When we receive a complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within 3 school days and send a full or interim response within 10 school days of receiving the complaint.**

**Name of complainant:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Telephone (day):**

**Telephone (evening):**

**What is your concern and how has it affected you?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list this below:**

**Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?**

**What would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**