



# Complaints Policy

This policy has been written to ensure that the school's ethos, curriculum, and practices promote shared values. It also encourages staff, children and other members of the Welbourne community to understand others and to value diversity, irrespective of gender, race, belief and sexual orientation.

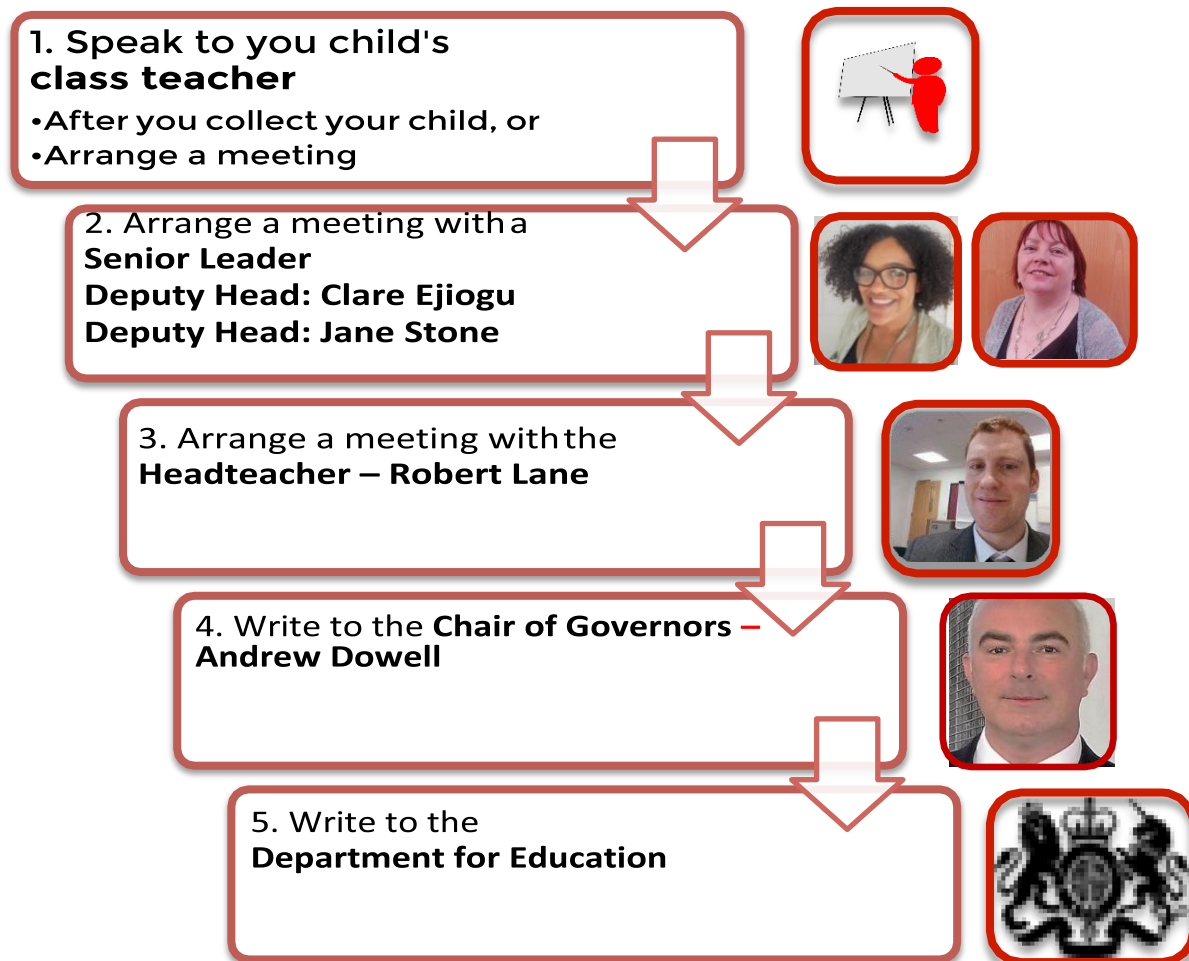
As a Rights Respecting School, we put the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of our planning, policies, practice and ethos.

Policy Agreed	Reviewed by	Ratified on	Approved by	Signature on behalf FGB	Next Review
January 2018	Robert Lane	9/3/2020 8/3/2021 6/3/2022 6/3/2023 4/3/2024 23/9/24	FGB	<i>Andrew Dowell</i>	September 2025

## Summary of the complaints procedure

If you have a concern, complaint or suggestion about our school, please be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child will not be affected in any way. We want to be able to resolve concerns or complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. Please contact the school as soon as possible with your concern.

You can only go to the next stage if you have tried the stage before and are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved.



- The school office will help you arrange any meetings and will pass on any written complaints for you.
- The school office can arrange translators to help you and the school.

# Introduction

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues.

If you have a concern, complaint or suggestion about our school, please be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child will not be affected in any way. We want to be able to resolve concerns or complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. Please contact the school as soon as possible with your concern.

This document outlines the procedure and the way in which your concern or complaint will be dealt with.

If you need help with the English language, please let the school know. The school may be able to help arrange translations of letters or provided and interpreter when dealing with your concern.

If you would like any support at any stage during this process, the school's Family Support Worker is able to provide this. Please ask the school office to arrange a meeting with her.

There is a flow chart summarizing the procedure at the beginning of this policy.

All staff will be trained in handling complaints in order to ensure that a consistent approach is taken in respect of all complaints received.

## **The difference between a complaint and a concern**

It is in everyone's interest that all concerns and complaints are taken seriously and resolved at the earliest possible stage as there are many issues that can be resolved informally without the need to follow formal procedures.

A 'concern' may be treated as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, and for which reassurances are sought.

A 'complaint' may be generally recognised as an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action.

## **Scope**

This complaints policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Welbourne School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other policies. For the avoidance of doubt, this policy does not cover matters relating to safeguarding which are covered by our safeguarding policy. We also have a separate policy in place relating to whistleblowing.

## **Time limits**

The school aims to consider and resolve all complaints as quickly, and efficiently as possible. As a general rule, we would expect complaints to be lodged as soon as possible and no later than 3 months after the incident or issue has occurred. The school may consider exceptions to this rule for example if the matter relates to child protection or safeguarding.

## **Confidentiality**

Complaints made under this policy will be treated confidentially, although there may be instances where information does need to be shared, for example in order to conduct a full investigation or where required by law. We would encourage you to try

to resolve your complaint with the school in the first instance before making a complaint to the Department for Education or discussing the complaint externally.

### **Record keeping**

The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. At the end of meetings or telephone calls the member of staff should ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The Headteacher will be responsible for these records and hold them centrally.

## **The complaints process**

### **Stage 1- Speak to your child's class teacher**

If you are concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, you should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with your child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be resolved informally, quickly and effectively 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 or well-being.

Where the concern is about a class teacher, the concern may be raised either with the teacher concerned, or, if preferred directly with one of the Deputy Headteachers (see stage 2 below).

### **Stage 2- Arrange a meeting with a Senior Leader**

If you feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher or your concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, you should make an appointment to discuss it with one of the Senior Leaders. However, if this is not convenient you can raise your concern by writing a letter, send an email to the school for their attention or you can arrange a meeting by telephone with one of them.

The Senior Leader will consider any such complaint very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. The Senior Leader you write to will acknowledge your complaint on receipt and consider your complaint. They will then endeavour to reply to you fully within 5 school term days, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter if this is not possible. The letter will explain the decision and reasons for the decision.

Where your complaint is about administration, this stage will be managed by the School Business Manager, so please contact the School Business Manager rather than a Senior Leader if this is the case.

### **Stage 3 - Arrange a meeting with the Headteacher**

Should you feel that the Senior Leader or the School Business Manager (as applicable) has not satisfactorily resolved your complaint (or the complaint is about a Senior Leader or the School Business Manager), you should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. However, if this is not convenient you can raise your concern by writing a letter, sending an email for the attention of the Headteacher or arrange a meeting by telephone with the Headteacher.

The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each

case thoroughly. The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint and will reply to you fully within 15 school term days. The letter will explain the decision and reasons for the decision.

#### **Stage 4 - Write to the Chair of Governors**

Should you have a complaint about the Headteacher, including that s/he has not satisfactorily resolved your complaint, or where you have exhausted the steps set out in Stages 1 - 3 above and you consider your complaint has not been resolved, you should write a letter or email of complaint to the Chair of Governors. The school office will be able to forward your complaint letter to the Chair of Governors.

You should always endeavour to put your complaint in writing. If it is not possible for you to write a formal letter of complaint, the school office will pass a message on to the Chair of Governors for you.

The Chair of Governors will then call a meeting of the Governors Complaints Panel. This panel is made up of three members of the governing (including the Chair of Governors) who have not had any previous involvement in your complaint.

The meeting will be arranged within 25 school term days of receipt of your formal letter of complaint and a member of that panel will inform you of the date.

The governor complaints panel will determine whether it is appropriate for the headteacher to attend the meeting with the panel or if it is more appropriate for the meeting to be held without the headteacher with a follow up meeting to be held between the panel and the headteacher to discuss the complaint.

At the meeting you will be given the opportunity to explain your complaint and what you want as an outcome to your complaint. If the headteacher is in attendance at the meeting, the headteacher will also be given the opportunity to explain her/his response.

Where a separate meeting is to be held with the headteacher, that meeting will be held within 15 school term days of the panel's meeting with you.

The Complaints Panel will write to you within 25 school term days of holding the meeting with you (if the headteacher is in attendance) or within 15 school term days of holding a follow up meeting with the headteacher communicating the outcome of your complaint.

#### **Taking a complaint further**

We very much hope that the complaint or concern will be settled within the school. However, if you remain unhappy with the response from the governing body or with the way in which the complaint was handled, you should contact the Department for Education:

online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus),

by telephone on: 0370 000 2288

by writing to:  
Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.

## Closure of Complaints and Unreasonable Complainants

Very occasionally, the school may feel that, regretfully, we need to close a complaint despite the complainant remaining dissatisfied. The school will do all they can to help to resolve a complaint but it may simply not be possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it may be a case of 'agreeing to disagree'.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behavior and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening and sometimes we may need to close a complaint.

Welbourne School defines unreasonable complainants as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints.*'

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses or unreasonably fails to follow this policy.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedures or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complaint expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings or the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including the referral to the Department of Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- vexatiously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social

## media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached or compromise the independence of the investigation.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Welbourne School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

Ultimately, the school reserves the right to close a complaint and cease correspondence where all reasonable action has been taken to resolve the complaint and the official process has been exhausted. This is because unreasonable complaints can seriously detract from key responsibilities within the school.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Welbourne School.