



The Willow on Broadwaters Vision

Our children are passionate learners who excel academically and are resilient, reflective, creative and confident. They leave us with the competencies needed to thrive in the current and future world.

Values

- We ensure our children love coming to school because it is safe, fun, challenging and exciting.
- We have high expectations and are committed to supporting each individual to achieve their dreams.
- Everyone is valued as a unique member of our diverse community.
- We uphold the highest standards in all that we do and look continually to improve ourselves, so that what we do today, we do even better tomorrow.



Complaints Policy

Last Review:	January 2016
Next Review date:	January 2018
Person Responsible:	Umarani Nathan

Complaints Policy

Introduction

At The Willow Primary School and Broadwaters Children's Centre we work very hard to build positive relationships with members of the public and local community. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. There is a clear protocol to follow and the steps with their outcomes are outlined in this document.

If anyone is unhappy with their child's education we encourage you to talk to the child's class teacher as soon as possible. We are confident that when a concern is shared, the class teacher can give reassurance or work with you to devise what steps need to be taken to address the concern. We will always work with you to ensure any situation is resolved.

If you have any general concerns relating to the school please contact the Parental Engagement Lead, Umarani Nathan.

As a school, we promise we will always aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for them.

The Complaints procedure

STAGE ONE - *Informal sharing of your concern with the school.*

Speak to a class teacher or our Parental Engagement Lead/Headteacher's PA Umarani Nathan.

In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher or the Parental Engagement Lead. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. Members of the school's senior leadership could be involved at this stage if appropriate. This can be done in a number of ways – via email, a phone-call, in person, or in writing.

STAGE TWO - *Arrange to speak to a Senior Management Team member;*

Miss Smith, Mrs Harris, Ms Ballantyne or Ms Beckles.

We expect most complaints to be resolved before reaching this stage. However if the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation you can make an appointment to see one of the senior management team. We will try to resolve most matters within 7 days (1 week during term times) and will always report our findings and actions to the complainant.

STAGE THREE - *Contact the Headteacher Ms Ferdinand.*

Complaints should rarely reach this formal level. Complaints should only reach this stage once the two procedures outlined above have been tried. You can write a letter, call in, email, or arrange a meeting with the PA to Headteacher, Umarani Nathan. In the initial contact you should explain why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The head teacher will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary you will be given adequate notice to prepare. You will be informed of the outcome/decision following the Headteachers' investigation and what further action will be taken within 10 school days.

STAGE FOUR – A letter to the Chair of Governors after following all the steps outlined above (or if the complaint is about the Headteacher)

You may take your complaint to the Chair of Governors within 6 months of the Headteachers' response. If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, you may make representation to the Governors. A letter addressed to the Chair of Governors marked "private and confidential" can be left at the school office. If the Governors then decide that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed governor panel. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A decision will be provided within 15 school days where possible.

If you have a complaint about the Head Teacher, you should first contact the Chair of the Governors. The Chair will do all they can to resolve any issues through a dialogue with the school, but if you are still unhappy with outcome, you can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

Please note: *If an anonymous complaint is received it will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances such as child protection/safeguarding issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.*

STAGE FIVE - Further representation (or complaint against the Chair of Governors)

If you remain dissatisfied you may make further representations. You may approach the Secretary of State for Education or the *Ombudsman if you are unhappy with the process or outcome. This would normally only be appropriate if you believe that the school or the Governing body have acted illegally or arbitrarily.

*** Please note the Ombudsman does not investigate internal school management**

If you have a complaint about the Chair of Governors, you should write to the Clerk of the Governing Body and give this to the school marking it private and confidential.

Investigating complaints

- The person investigating the complaint will:
 - ❖ Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
 - ❖ Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
 - ❖ Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
 - ❖ Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
 - ❖ Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
 - ❖ Complete all necessary notes.

Unreasonable complaints

The Willow School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Willow Primary 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 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 procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant 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 of the investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for 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;
- 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.

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 The Willow Primary 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.

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 the school premises.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint, both the school and the complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.*
- Assurance that the event (that was the basis of the complaint) will not recur.
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld.
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern.

*An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence

Please note: *If, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.*

Monitoring and review

- The Governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher will log all stage 2, 3 and 4 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These will be reported as part of the head teachers report to Governors.
- The Governors of The Willow Primary School review this policy as necessary every two years.