



## **Compliment and Complaint Policy**

All the staff at Stopsley Community Primary School and Nursery strive to deliver high quality learning to your children, at all times and in all areas of contact with the pupil's parents and carers.

We are realistic enough to appreciate that there may be times when a less than efficient and effective service may be given or instances where you, our community, is less than happy with the service you have received. We hope you never have cause for serious complaint but if you do, we have a complaints procedure aimed at quick resolution of problems and issues.

### **Aims of this policy**

- To uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- To support the well-being of pupils, staff, and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents.
- To deal fairly, honestly, and properly with persistent complainants and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

### **Part One - How to give a compliment or complain**

As a parent or carer of pupils at our school, you have the right to praise or complain about any aspect of the service with which you are more or less than satisfied. Where you are less than satisfied, we hope that most issues can be sorted out easily and quickly, often at the time they arise and with the person concerned.

Matters can usually be sorted to everyone's satisfaction by using the informal method outlined below.

#### **Compliments**

These can be given verbally or in writing to the school office. It is encouraging to hear when situations go well and are appreciated. There is opportunity to give compliments through the annual questionnaire or Parent View.

#### **Informal Procedure for Complaints**

As a matter of daily routine, as a school we receive numerous contacts and information from parents and other members of the public or interested parties. Many of these will be resolved simply by providing information or via an informal meeting by the individual member of staff who can provide the necessary information.

Initially, we ask that this is via the school office or class teacher. A message can be sent through to the class teacher either by contacting the school office or by placing a note in your child's book bag. It is reasonable for a request for information be responded to in 5 working days, given the constraints of the working day for school staff.

In some cases, it may be necessary to request a meeting with a senior leader such as Assistant Headteacher. Any such request needs to be made via the school office. The request should include sufficient details to allow the school to decide whether a meeting is necessary, who should attend and make any necessary preparations. It is reasonable that this process takes **5 school working days** when you will be informed if a meeting is to be given or the answer to your request will be given.

### **Formal Procedure for Complaints**

Where a matter is more serious, or the informal approach has failed to resolve the issue it may be raised as a formal complaint.

A formal complaint needs to be made in writing and should be addressed to the Headteacher.

If the informal process has not been used, a decision will be made by the school to issue the relevant person to respond to your concerns rather than the Headteacher.

### **What we will do**

If your complaint is written you will receive acknowledgement within two working days from receipt. We will investigate your complaint within **10 school working days** of the complaint being received. We shall then be in a position to offer you an explanation, or a meeting with the people involved if that is deemed appropriate.

When we look into a complaint we will aim to:

- Investigate and find out what happened and what, if anything, went wrong on both sides
- Make sure you receive an explanation or an apology where this is appropriate.
- Identify what we can do to make sure the problem doesn't happen again.

It is sincerely hoped that any complaint you have about the school can be dealt with by those responsible in school for ensuring pupil care, their progress and the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

### **So, if you want to talk to us to sort an issue out, use this checklist:**

1. Have you spoken with your class teacher or school office and given the reasonable length of time?
2. Yes, but still not happy, arrange to contact, in writing or face to face, one of our Senior Leaders, Mr J Dymock, Assistant Headteacher. Mrs M Johnstone, Assistant Headteacher, Mrs R Rhodes, Assistant Headteacher, or Mrs N Broderick, Deputy Headteacher
3. If you are still not happy at this point, make an appointment with the Headteacher, Mr R Fordham.

However, there may be very rare times when you may not be happy with the results of the complaints procedure so far. In this case you can write to the Governing Body who will review the complaint and the procedure.

You should contact:

The Chair of Governors, c/o Stopsley Community Primary School and Nursery, Hitchin Road, Luton, LU2 7UG

## **Part 2 - Persistent Complainants and Harassment**

### **Who is a persistent complainant?**

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who continues to complain about issues that have been proven to be unfounded, either formally or informally; or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school and whose behaviour is unreasonable.

Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- a) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious with disregard for the reasonable timescales given by the school to resolve an issue or complaint
- b) prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint; not allowing the school the reasonable timescales for resolution
- c) an insistence upon pursuing unfounded complaints and/or being unrealistic or unreasonable with regards the outcomes for satisfactory resolution
- d) an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner e.g. shouting, swearing, leaving aggressive messages, personally threatening to adults or children
- e) involving other parents or groups by using social media to bring children into disrepute so that a complaint cannot be successfully resolved

Use of these forms of behaviour may be seen as harassment.

Harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of the behaviour outlined above so it:

- a) appears to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff
- b) causes ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or has significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community
- c) is pursued aggressively and angrily

### **Parents' expectations of the school**

Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- a) regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing (i) how and when problems can be raised with the school, (ii) the existence of the school's complaints procedure and (iii) the existence of the Persistent Complaints/Harassment Policy (Part 2 of the Compliments and Complaints Policy)
- b) respond within a reasonable time
- c) be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the children within the school and the nature of the complaint
- d) respond with courtesy and respect
- e) attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies, and practice and in line with guidance and advice from the Local Authority
- f) keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

### **The school's expectations of parents/carers/members of the public**

The school can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the school to:

- a) treat all school staff with courtesy and respect
- b) respect the needs and well-being of children and staff within the school
- c) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
- d) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
- e) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond
- f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
- g) (in the case of a complaint) follow the school's complaints procedure

### **The school's actions in cases of persistent complaint or harassment**

The school will take the following consecutive steps as necessary if the complainant's behaviour is not modified:

- a) inform the complainant orally or in writing that his/her behaviour is considered to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and may be considered to fall under the terms of this policy
- b) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and warn of further sanctions under the Policy (Model Letter 1)
- c) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to fall under the terms of this policy (see Model Letter 2) and that the complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the school considers to be reasonable.

As appropriate this may additionally result in the school:

- a) informing the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties (see Model Letter 3)
- b) informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all communication from the complainant to the school should be carried out in writing (see Model Letter 4)
- c) in the case of physical or verbal aggression considering warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceeding straight to a temporary ban.
- d) consider taking advice from Luton Local Authority on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation

**Model letter 1:** Warning a complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be in breach of the policy and of the consequences of remaining in breach of policy.

Dear.....

This letter is to inform you that the school considers your actions in ..... on..... when you ..... to be in breach of the School's Compliments and Complaints Policy in relation to harassment and persistent complainant.

We are aware that you have raised some concerns, and would advise you that these can be addressed by/the school is addressing these by \* .....

At the moment we are dealing with these issues at stage \* of the School's Complaints Procedure. Please note that the School's Compliments and Complaints Policy sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people towards the school.

These include:

- behaving reasonably
- treating others with courtesy and respect
- avoiding harassing behaviour
- reasonably resolving complaints using the School's Complaints Procedure
- avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times

The Policy also indicates the steps that we can take if these standards are breached. Steps that we will take:

- not investigating your complaint further unless it is pursued in a manner considered by the school to be reasonable
- [insert additional steps as appropriate] Additional steps that we may take if necessary:
- make special arrangements for your meetings and communication with the school
- ban you from the school premises
- take legal action against you

[delete as appropriate]

I would ask that you allow the school time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures and would assure you that we shall take every possible step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

I am confident that you will respect our need to maintain a calm and welcoming environment at all times.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

- Fill in as appropriate

**Model letter 2:** Informing a complainant that his/her further behaviour means that the sanctions referred to in Letter 1 will now be invoked.

Dear ..... \*

You will recall that I wrote to you on ..... \* telling you that we felt your behaviour in.....on.....when you..... \* Was below the standard we expect of all people toward the school and was in breach of the School's Compliment and Complaints Policy in terms of harassment and persistent complainant.

I am now writing to inform you that your behaviour in..... on.....when you..... \* has now led us to apply for the foreseeable future the School's Policy because it has again been breached.

As a result, of the following actions in relation to the Policy have been taken: \*

- The school will not investigate your complaint further unless it is pursued in a manner considered by the School to be reasonable
- The school will make special arrangements for meetings and/ or communication with the school.
- Banning you from the school premises for .....

[delete as appropriate]

These arrangements do not, apply, of course, to any emergencies concerning #..., which should be reported to the school in the usual way.

These measures will be reviewed by the school on #.....

If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, please do so in writing to me at the school by ..... \*

I do hope that the difficulties can now be quickly resolved.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

\* Delete as appropriate

# Fill in as appropriate

**Model letter 3:** Informing a complainant that special arrangements will be made for him/her to meet members of staff

Dear .....\*

Following my letter to you of .....\* informing you that we felt your recent behaviour in connection with the School to be unacceptable/ unreasonable \*, and that we now considered you to be subject to the School's Persistent Complaints/Harassment as part of the Compliments and Complaints Policy, I am now writing to outline for you the arrangements we have made regarding meetings at the School.

For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with a member of staff, we would ask you to note:

- a) this meeting will be arranged with a written appointment as soon as possible, and with a third-party present
- b) in the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made These arrangements do not, apply, of course, to any emergencies concerning \*, which should be reported to the school in the usual way.

I thank you for your forbearance and patience in this matter and do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

- Fill in as appropriate

**Model letter 4:** Requesting that future communication should be by letter only

Dear .....\*

You will recall that I wrote to you on .....\* informing you that we felt your recent behaviour in connection with the school to be unacceptable/unreasonable \*, and that we now considered you to be subject to the School's Persistent Complaints/Harassment, Part 2 of the Compliments and Complaints Policy.

**I am now requesting that, for the foreseeable future, all routine communication with the school should be by letter only.** Please address all letters to.....\* at the school.

We shall respond as quickly as possible and within our outlined reasonable timescales.

This request does not apply, of course, to any emergency involving \*-- in which case you should contact the school in the usual way, or to parents' evenings, which will continue as in the past, but with a third-party present.

I do hope that we can resolve the ongoing difficulties as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher