



Parent  
Information

# Woodfield School

Complaints Procedure:  
Information for Parents

**Date: September 2016**

# HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

### What is the purpose of this policy?

The purpose is to help you with any concerns or complaints you have about your child's school.

Most of the time, any concerns you have about your child's school can best be settled by talking to the class teacher or Headteacher. However, there may be occasions when you want to make a complaint to the school's Governing Body and this information is designed to help you.

This booklet describes the arrangements which Hertfordshire County Council recommends and Woodfield School has agreed to use when dealing with complaints about school matters. School Governors are responsible in law for having a published complaints procedure and for responding to any complaint.

The guidance to schools aims to be fair to pupils, parents and school staff and recognises that responsibilities rest with each of these three. It takes account of the responsibilities of the Headteacher, the school's governing body and of Hertfordshire County Council, as the Local Authority (LA).

These complaints arrangements are well established and were made following consultation with Headteachers, governors, the teacher associations and representatives of parent groups.

Under this complaints procedure any member of school staff who is complained about will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint during its investigation, and will be able to see any subsequent response sent to the complainant.

There is an entirely separate procedure for schools to follow in dealing with staff disciplinary matters. Therefore, if in the course of their consideration of a complaint the governing body or Local Authority conclude that disciplinary proceedings should be started, they will take separate action.

### What happens at the first stage?

Most concerns, complaints or potential complaints can be resolved by talking to the member of school staff concerned. The school can tell you who you should speak to first.

If the concern isn't resolved by speaking to a member of staff, you should then request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days. If your first contact is with individual governors, you may be asked to take up your concerns with the Headteacher or the appropriate member of staff. A governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a panel in the event of a formal hearing (2<sup>nd</sup> stage) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors at the school. A Parent Partnership supporter may also be able to help you. See back page for contact details.

### **What happens at the second stage?**

The school may ask you to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- make it clear why you are complaining
- say who you have spoken to already
- explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the governing body. This is likely to involve a panel of governors. If the chair of governors or another governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at stage 1, s/he should arrange for another governor to take charge of the investigation. The governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. The governing body should give you full details of how they will carry out any further investigation or formal hearing and keep you up-to-date with progress.

You and the school must make sure the governors' complaint panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The chair of the panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the governing body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named by parents in the complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the governors. They may be represented. If this happens, the school will inform you before the meeting.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the chair of the panel or the governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the governing body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The governing body should aim to deal with complaints within 28 school days of the date of the written complaint.

### **Is there a third stage of complaint?**

**For most complaints, the procedure ends with the governing body and there is no third stage of complaint to the Local Authority.**

If the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted and you remain dissatisfied, you can approach the Secretary of State. Further advice is available from the Children's Legal Centre, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) or Parentline Plus.

**If your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Statement of Special Educational Needs you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority.**

In this case, you can write to the Complaints Manager at Customer Focus Team, CSF, County Hall, Hertford who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and then inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. The complaints team will aim to investigate your complaint within 25 working days; however this may be longer for complex situations. When your complaint has been fully investigated the complaints manager will write to let you know the decision. S/he will give the reasons for the decision, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and anyone else concerned in the investigation.

Parents who remain dissatisfied following further investigation by the Local Authority have the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman who may decide to conduct an additional investigation: Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH. Tel: 0300 061 0614. Email: [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk)

**If your complaint is about the national curriculum or collective worship in a community or voluntary-controlled school, you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority.**

In this case, you can complain further by writing to the Complaints Manager who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. S/he will make sure your complaint is investigated and will ask the governing body for further information or advice as necessary. Following this investigation, a panel made up of the complaints manager and three members of the local authority will consider your complaint. You may talk to the investigating officer about your complaint and present your case personally to the panel. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. Up to two representatives of the governing body may speak at the meeting.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint the complaints manager will write and let you know the decision. S/he will explain the reasons for the decision, any action taken or proposed to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Clerk and Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. The aim will be to complete this process within 25 working days (this may be longer for complex cases).

### **Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?**

**Yes, you can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:**

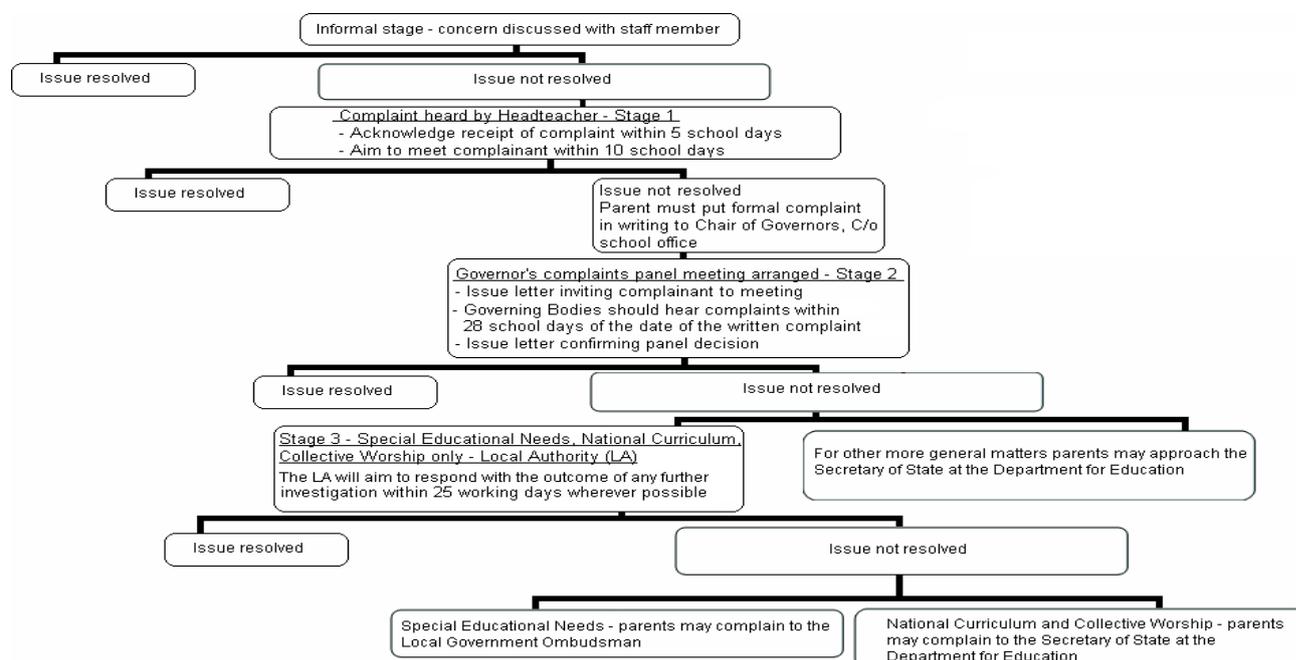
The Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT. Tel: 0370 000 2288.  
Web: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Please note that the Department for Education will only follow up your complaint with the school or the Local Authority if they believe either might have acted unreasonably or failed to carry out a statutory duty.

## Useful contact details

Chair of Governors	C/o Woodfield School, Malmes Croft, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 8RL Email: <a href="mailto:governors@woodfield.herts.sch.uk">governors@woodfield.herts.sch.uk</a>	
Complaints Team Children Schools and Families	<a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/csfcustomerfocus">www.hertsdirect.org/csfcustomerfocus</a> Email: <a href="mailto:cft.csf@hertscc.gov.uk">cft.csf@hertscc.gov.uk</a>	01992 588542
SENDIASS	<a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership">www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership</a> Email: <a href="mailto:parent.partnership@hertscc.gov.uk">parent.partnership@hertscc.gov.uk</a>	01992 555847
Minority Ethnic Curriculum Support Service (MECS) If your complaint is about racial harassment or discrimination	<a href="http://www.thegrid.org.uk">www.thegrid.org.uk</a>	
ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)	<a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a>	0300 0115 142
POhWER (advocacy service)	<a href="http://www.pohwer.net">www.pohwer.net</a>	0300 456 2370
Family Lives	<a href="http://www.familylives.org.uk">www.familylives.org.uk</a>	0808 800 2222
Children's Legal Centre	<a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a>	0345 345 4345
Citizen's Advice Bureau	<a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a>	

## Summary of the complaints process



**Headteacher: Mrs Gill Waceba**  
**Chair of Governors: Mrs Kate Worden**

Woodfield School

Malmes Croft  
Leverstock Green  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts HP3 8RL  
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