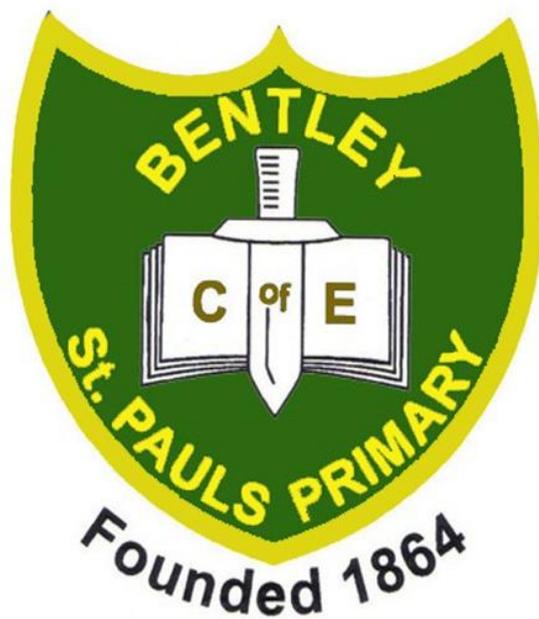


BENTLEY ST PAUL'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure



'Growing together in faith, love and trust, we will succeed.'

Date of Policy: September 2013

Date of Review: September 2015

Date Ratified by FGB: November 2013

Stage 1: The first contact

1.1 Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.

1.2 If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, he/she will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number.

1.3 All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. He/she will check later to make sure that the referral has been dealt with.

1.4 If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher, he/she may decide to deal with the concerns directly at this stage.

1.5 The staff member initially dealing with the matter should make sure that the parent is clear what, if any, action or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, in writing if necessary.

1.6 Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents will be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they are advised to write to the Headteacher or, if the complaint relates to the Headteacher, to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2: Formal involvement of the Headteacher

2.1 The Headteacher (or designate) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a target date for providing a response to the complainant – normally within ten working days. If thereafter it is not possible to respond within the ten days, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

2.2 Ordinarily the Headteacher (or designate) will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet with him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It should be made clear to the complainant that he/she may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf. The Headteacher (or designate) may also be accompanied if the circumstances warrant this.

2.3 Where necessary, following the meeting, the Headteacher (or designate) will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil concerned and others present at the time, should be interviewed. Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present unless this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where a pupil has specifically said he/she would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved. In such circumstances another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If the complaint is against a member of staff, he/she must subsequently be allowed to explain his/her version of events.

2.4 The Headteacher (or designate) will keep written records of all meetings and telephone conversations – which should be signed and dated – and other related documentation.

2.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher (or designate) may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly. In any event a written response should always be sent, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, the letter will indicate what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant must be advised that should he/she wish to take the complaint further he/she should notify the Chair of Governors within two weeks of receiving the letter.

2.6 If a complaint is against the action of a Headteacher (or if the Headteacher has been very closely involved at Stage 1) the Chair of Governors will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3: Consideration by the governing body

3.1 When the Chair of the governing body receives notice of a complaint, he/she will decide whether it appears appropriate to seek an informal resolution to the issue.

3.2 If so, he/she will:

- Either telephone and/or meet with the parent/guardian to hear their side of the story;
- Talk to the Headteacher to investigate further;
- Discuss with the Headteacher how the issue might be resolved;
- Agree with the Headteacher whether it would be helpful for the Chair of Governors, or another governor, to act as facilitator/mediator between the head and the parent;
- Seek to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both the Headteacher and the parent;

3.3 If the Chair decides that action as at 3.2 is not appropriate in the circumstances, or having tried this approach the matter is still not resolved, then he/she must write to the parent to let him /her know that the matter will be referred to the complaints review panel. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint to the panel.

Complaints review panel

3.4 According to the arrangements concerning membership¹ of the complaints review panel as agreed by the governing body, the clerk to the governors will seek to convene the panel within 20 working days.

¹ The panel members must be governors with no prior involvement with the complaint. If he/she has not previously been involved, the chairman of the governing body should chair the panel; otherwise the vice-chairman should do so. It is not appropriate for the headteacher to sit on the panel. The advantages of having a parent governor on the panel should be considered.

3.5 The clerk will ask the Headteacher to prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. The Headteacher should additionally ask members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to prepare reports.

3.6 The clerk to the governors will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses, and members of the panel at least five working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. All relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint should be included with the letter. The complainant should also be informed of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/representative/advocate. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

3.7 Subject to the prior agreement of the chairman of the panel, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to attend the hearing.

3.8 It is the responsibility of the chairman of the panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

3.9 The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve resolution between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has at least been considered carefully, but that a resolution is not possible.

3.10 The panel should remember that many parents are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the panel. The chairman of the panel will therefore ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

3.11 If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

3.12 The meeting should allow for:

- The complainant to explain his/her complaint and the Headteacher to explain the school's response;
- The Headteacher to ask the complainant questions about the complaint and the complainant to ask the Headteacher, and/or other members of staff, questions about the school's response;
- Panel members to have an opportunity to ask questions of both the complainant and the Headteacher;
- Any party has the right to call witnesses (subject to prior approval of the chairman) and all parties having the right to ask questions of all the witnesses;
- Final statements by both the complainant and the Headteacher.

3.13 The chairman of the panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and that written notice of the decision will be sent to both parties within two weeks. The complainant, Headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

3.14 The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:

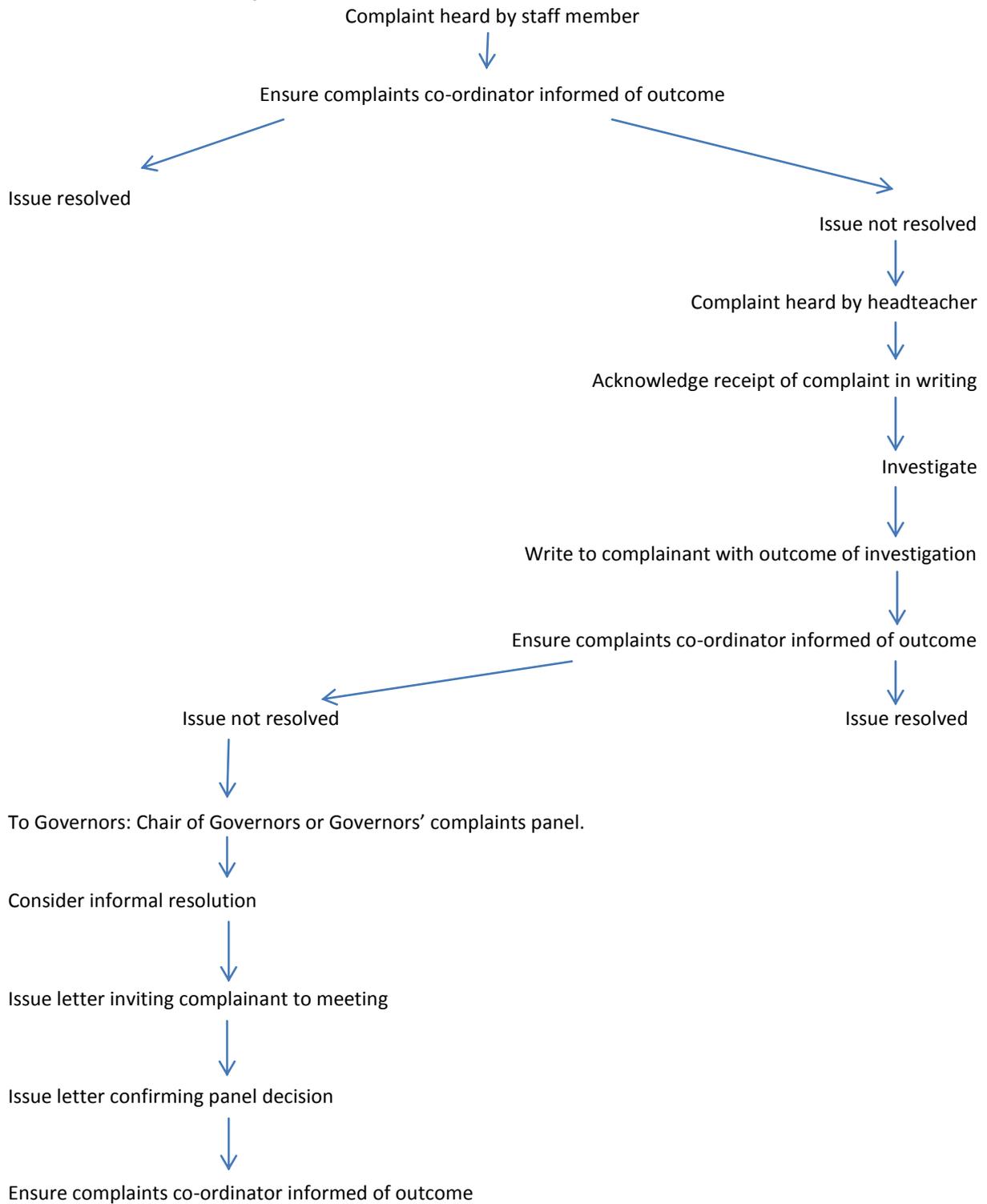
- Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
- Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Where appropriate, recommend to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

3.15 A written statement outlining the decision of the panel will be sent to the complainant and Headteacher. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

3.16 The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

A copy of this document is available on request from the school office.

Annex A – Flowchart of process



Annex B – Example of a complaint form

Your name:	Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	Daytime telephone number:
Postcode:	Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature :	Date:
Official use Date acknowledgment sent: By who:	Complaint referred: Date