	SLINGSBY SCHOOL Complaints Procedure Policy	Date for Review October 2023
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Background

The Education Act 2002 requires Governing Boards of schools to have a procedure to deal with complaints about the school and any facilities or services that the school provides. The procedure must also be publicised.

From 31st July 2012 under section 45 of the Education Act 2011, the duty on Local Authorities to consider complaints about the curriculum, sex education and religious worship in maintained schools was removed.

Also, from 1st August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the Local Authority should now be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

This document sets out the procedure that Slingsby Community Primary School will follow to investigate any concerns or complaints that are made against it.

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’. A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Slingsby CP about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Slingsby C P other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with NYCC

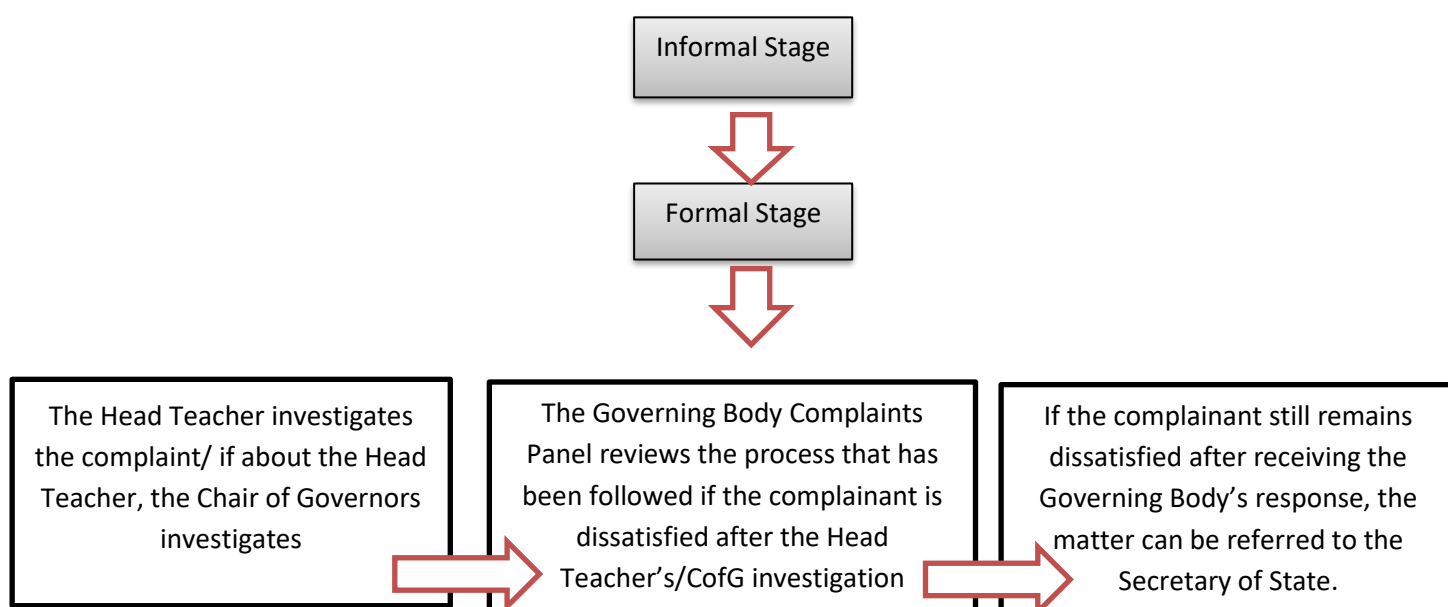
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

General principles:

- The procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 30 working days after the event, being complained of, will not be considered. Slingsby C P will only consider complaints made outside of this timescale if exceptional circumstances apply.

A summary of the process in place follows the order of events as listed below. At Slingsby School we insist that a concern or complaint is raised within 30 working days of it arising due to lengthy timescales affecting the memory of what was said or done precisely.



Raising a concern or a complaint

Informal stage

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, telephone or in person by appointment only, requested via the school office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints or concerns will be resolved at the informal stage.

In the case of more serious complaints or concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head Teacher, or to the Chair of the Governing Body if the concern or complaint is about the Head Teacher (chair@slingsby.n-yorks.sch.uk).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, seek advice from the school office or the Clerk to the Governing Body. (01653 628370/admin@slingsby.n-yorks.sch.uk). Please **do not discuss** the nature of the complaint with the Clerk as this will breach the code of confidentiality that Clerks must uphold. Please **do not discuss** the complaint with any serving member of the Governing Body.

Formal stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, you may choose to put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Head Teacher, who will be responsible for ensuring it is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, your complaint should be passed via the school office to the Senior Teacher. This should be marked for the attention of the Chair of the Governing Body. The Senior Teacher will pass on your correspondence to the Chair of Governors.

You should include details that might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions you feel you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

The Head Teacher (or Chair) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend/family member, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns. In the interests of impartiality and fairness, any person accompanying you must understand their role is purely that of support to you, and should come themselves with unbiased opinions or views. The Head Teacher will have a representative of the Governing Body present at the meeting, plus a note taker to record actions only.

It is usual and expected that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Head Teacher (or Chair). You will learn in writing, within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification will include an indication of the anticipated timescales.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible, and when it has been concluded, you will be informed, in writing, of its conclusion. This should be within 20 working days from when the complaint was received. Please bear in mind that complaints sent at weekends or during holidays will not be acknowledged or addressed until the recipient has received and read them. Complaints raised outside of term time or on the last day of a school term will be considered to have been received on the first day of the following term after the holiday period. Slingsby CP School operates its complaints process during working days.

Review process by the Governing Body

In the very rare event that you are dissatisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the Governing Body reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint.

Any such request must be made in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body via the school office, within 5 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of the Formal Stage, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of two to three members of the Governing Body complaints panel, depending on availability, who will have no prior knowledge of the complaint. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from the Informal Stage of the procedure.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically. These must be submitted to the panel at least 5 working days before the review. All parties will receive a copy of all submissions by the date of the review.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. Notes taken should not require consent as these are actions only.

You will be informed, in writing, of its conclusion. This should be within 20 working days from when the complaint was received.

If you still feel dissatisfied, you will need to refer the matter to the Secretary of State using the details as listed below. Please note however, that The Secretary of State's powers are delegated to the school complaints unit (SCU). The SCU will only consider cases where the Governing Body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. It will only overturn a decision in extreme circumstances. If, however, it decides that a school has not followed its published procedures, it has the power to direct that the process is re-visited.

Telephone	0370 000 2288
Online	www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus
Letter	DFE, School Complaints Unit, Second Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Slingsby C P School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

We view all complaints in a positive way, as it helps the school improve its practices. However, persistent complainants will be dealt with via the Serial, Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

Slingsby Community Primary School: Meeting request form

I wish to meet *[insert name of the member of staff]* to discuss the following matter:

Brief details of topic to be discussed:
Dates/times when it would be most convenient for a meeting:

Your name:

Relationship with school (eg parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to the matter to be discussed):

Your address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Signed

Date:

Please complete this form and return it to the school office. Thank you.

School use:

<i>Date form received:</i>	<i>Received by:</i>
<i>Date response sent:</i>	<i>Response sent by:</i>