



Complaints Policy

Reviewed by Governors: Spring 2024

Signed by Governor: J Atherley

Signed by Headteacher: C. Beaty

This policy will be reviewed annually

Review date: Spring 2025

Complaints Policy

Introduction

Under the Education Act 2002 schools are required to have an approved procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services the school provides.

At Aldwyn Primary School we all work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. However, for parents and carers of pupils at our school, we have a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this policy.

1. If any parents of pupils at Aldwyn Primary School are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class teacher they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class teacher. They will always be taken seriously and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.
2. We promise we will always 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.

This Policy does not refer to areas where Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (TMBC), as the Local Authority (LA), has the lead role or for which separate appeal arrangements are provided. These include:

- Pupil admissions
- Pupil exclusions
- Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs

Issues related to child protection, criminal investigations and employee grievances must also all be dealt with separately from this policy.

This complaints policy is distinct from formal staff disciplinary proceedings and this should be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint gives rise to disciplinary procedures which put the complaints process on hold. If and when this occurs, the complainant should be informed. Any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint should continue to be dealt with through the usual complaints procedures. This policy does not cover complaints made against Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. Any complaint of this sort should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's 'Corporate Complaints Procedure'. This policy sets out the most suitable and effective process for dealing with the majority of complaints which are not covered by alternative procedures.

The complaints process

- Stage 1. Informal expression of concern made to the school. In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. Members of the school's senior leadership may be involved at this stage.
- Stage 2. Discussion with Key Stage Leader. We expect most complaints to be resolved by this stage. However if the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation parents must make an appointment with the year Key Stage Leader. The Key Stage Leader will need time to fully investigate the matter and will respond with 7 school days.
- Stage 3. Head Teacher. Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Head Teacher. Complaints at this stage should be written and received within 10 school days of the year group leaders feedback. Your letter should be addressed to the Head teacher and marked "private and confidential". The letter should say 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 of the head teachers' investigation and decision on what further action will be taken within 10 school days.
- Stage 4. Governors. You may take your complaint to the school Governors within 6 months of the Head Teachers' response. If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent 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 consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed 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 days where possible.
- Stage 5. Further representation. 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, the Governing body and the LEA have acted illegally or arbitrarily.

* Please note the Ombudsman does not investigate internal school management

If parents have a complaint about the Head Teacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Governors (as at stage 4 above) who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all they can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

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.

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

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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint schools and 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. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared.
- 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

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 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 Aldwyn Primary School review this policy annually.

Equality

This policy is linked to our Equality Policy.

We aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

At Aldwyn Primary school we will continuously strive to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Each person will be given fair and equal opportunities to develop their full potential regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Safeguarding

At Aldwyn Primary School, the welfare and safety of our children is our paramount concern. We will promote the health, well-being and safety of the pupils in all we do. All our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school. We take seriously our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility.