

Concerns/Complaints by Parents Policy

The Staff at Cranwell Primary School are dedicated to giving every child the best possible education, whilst also caring for their health, safety and welfare at all times. The School is committed to working closely with parents and encourages both parties to work in partnership with each other, being fully aware of their own particular responsibilities that enable pupils to gain the most from their time in School. The School acknowledges that from time to time, parents may feel that something is not going quite as they might expect, or that the School is doing something about which a parent is not happy, and sometimes the School may be omitting to do something which a parent thinks they should. This Policy sets out the procedures for raising concerns or complaints with the School.

Procedures:

Initial Complaints Procedure

The School promotes a two-way conversation with parents, and encourages any parent with a grievance to come into School and discuss it. If a parent feels they would like to make a complaint, then the formal process for making a complaint is as follows:

1. Parents should arrange to discuss any concerns with their child's Class Teacher/staff member. A majority of concerns or grievances are resolved at this stage.
2. If the parents feel that the complaint has not been dealt with properly by discussion with the member of Staff in the initial stage, or if the concern is about the conduct of a particular Staff member, then the parents should discuss the matter with the Deputy Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teacher or Head Teacher. Almost all cases are dealt with satisfactorily at this stage.
3. Unless the complaint is about the conduct of the Head Teacher, parents should make a formal written complaint to the Head Teacher. Parents will receive a written response to a formal written complaint.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the headteacher or the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further.
5. In cases of complaints of physical handling of a pupil by a member of Staff, the first recourse of the Head Teacher, or in some cases the Governors, will be to consult the Education & Child Protection Officers of the Local Authority.

Governors' Complaints Procedure

The order in which to take when directing a complaint through the Governors is as follows:

1. All complaints to the Governing Body must be initiated by means of a letter sent to the Clerk to the Governors detailing the complaint, and accompanied by any supporting evidence. The Clerk will then ensure that the complaints process is commenced as soon as practicable. If, for some reason, the complainant is unable to write their own letter, then the Clerk should be contacted, via the school, who will then produce a typewritten statement for the complainant to sign.
2. The Governors will appoint a minimum of three of their number to form a Complaints Committee to adjudicate upon the complaint. Those Governors chosen will ideally have no knowledge whatsoever of the details surrounding the complaint, thereby providing an impartial view on the complaint. Once the Committee has been formed, it will deal with the complaint through written representations as recommended by the LA.
3. The Clerk to the Governors will write to the complainant outlining this procedure. The complaint will be forwarded to the Head Teacher who will have 7 working days in which to respond. The Head Teacher's response will then be sent to the complainant for comment, who must also give any counter response within 7 working days. Finally, the counter response will go to the Head Teacher who has a further 7 working days in which to add to his initial response. All the responses are then put before the Complaints Committee for adjudication. To avoid any doubt, all communications should be made through the Clerk to the Governors; neither party should send their response to the other directly.
4. The Complaints Committee must have all the necessary evidence to make the decision. If further evidence is required from either party, the Committee will adjourn and request that information. The Complaints Committee will only make a decision when it is satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to make a final decision. In cases of difficulty, the LA may be called upon for advice. The Complaints Committee adopts a robust approach, and does not simply endorse the decision of the Head Teacher without any consideration of the evidence.
5. The decision of the Complaints Committee is given in a detailed written response and is passed to the Chairperson of the Governors for scrutiny. After approval by the Chairperson, copies are then released to the complainant and the Head Teacher within 5 working days of the decision. This decision letter will outline the nature of the complaint, the factors taken into consideration, and the decision of the Complaints Committee.
6. Providing the procedures, as laid down in this policy are followed, then there is no right of appeal following the decision, and the decision of the governors is final.

7. A parent who is dissatisfied may contact the LA. The Schools Liaison Officer will look at the merits of a complaint and will look at how the Complaints Committee dealt with it to ensure that this procedure has been followed.

Any panel or group of governors considering complaints is to be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

As best practice, the Clerk should share copies of the panel meeting minutes with all parties involved in the panel hearing, providing a reasonable opportunity for the minutes to be agreed and if necessary, challenged.

Where the first approach of a concern or complaint is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. It would be useful if governors did not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Monitoring

The School keeps a central register of all complaints received and a summary of these complaints are communicated to the Governing Body. Complaint and investigation papers are not attached to a child's file as they do not relate to the child, but the Clerk keeps one copy of all evidence and correspondence, and all other papers are destroyed.

This Policy has been written following the advice from the National Governors Association, Governors Handbook and the DFE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016.