

## **Montpelier Primary School, Ealing**

### **Complaints Policy 2015**

At Montpelier School we value positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community and endeavour to maintain these by working together to resolve any issues that may arise over time.

It is most important to recognise the difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. In the vast majority of cases, parent / carer **concerns** about issues related to children or the school can be handled successfully through informal, or formal, means. Child related issues should initially be raised with a class teacher or, if necessary a more senior member of staff such as phase leader, special needs coordinator, assistant head teacher or deputy head teacher. It is normally the case that a concern will be addressed and resolved in this way and clarification provided, if needed, in order to avoid any future issues. The school takes all concerns very seriously and a thorough commitment to resolving issues can be expected by all parties concerned.

On rare occasions, a concern may not be resolved using normal school procedures and if differences cannot be accepted by all parties, the school **complaints** procedure may be considered. This should be a final resort after other approaches have been exhausted. Making a formal complaint is a serious matter and the following process should be adhered to in such an event.

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1 Complaint heard by a senior staff member (normally a deputy head teacher)**

The school will respect the views of the complainant even if they differ from its own. Stage 1 is an opportunity for the complainant to meet a senior member of staff and attempt to resolve an ongoing concern. It is important that complainants do not directly approach members of the governing body as strict procedures and protocols must be followed.

If the complaint is directly against the head teacher, the meeting should be held with the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Complaints Committee / Vice Chair of Governors. If none of these governors are available, another governor may be suggested (not a parent governor) or the meeting will need to be arranged at a suitable time.

In both cases above, this meeting should take place within 10 working days unless there are prohibiting factors.

At this stage, the senior member of staff will try to ascertain what outcome or resolution would be most acceptable to the complainant.

#### **Stage 2 Complaint heard by the head teacher**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at stage 1, they may choose to either stop the process or move to stage 2. The head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The head teacher will meet the complainant and make a decision following a full analysis of the situation. This decision will be given to the complainant in writing and if the complaint is upheld, the head teacher will confirm this.

Again, the head teacher will try to ascertain what outcome or resolution would be most acceptable to the complainant.

### **Stage 3            Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.**

This is a formal and private hearing in order to establish the facts and make recommendations. The hearing is intended to satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously. The appeal panel will ensure the meeting has a clerk and may elect to take independent specialist external advice should it be deemed necessary to do so. Minutes recorded by the clerk may be available to all relevant parties following a decision by the appeal panel but not individuals' notes.

#### **Procedure:**

The complainant should inform the panel in advance if s/he intends to invite any witnesses to give information to the hearing. **Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.**

1. After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
2. The head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
3. The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
4. The complainant may question both the head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
5. The panel may ask questions at **any** point.
6. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
7. The head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
8. Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
9. The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 20 working days.

#### **The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel**

The panel can:

dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

uphold the complaint in whole or in part;

decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;

recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.