



Langstone Infant School

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Procedures revised in line with Portsmouth School Complaints Procedure

In order to investigate your complaint as fully as possible the governing body of Langstone Infant School have implemented a staged approach.

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 and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
- 1.2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he 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. S/he will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.
- 1.4. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher she may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage; if the complaint is against the Headteacher the parent will be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.
- 1.5. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.
- 1.6. Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further they should write to the Headteacher.

Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher for investigation

- 2.1 The Headteacher (or designated person eg Deputy) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- 2.2 The Headteacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet them to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on his/her behalf.
- 2.3 If necessary the Headteacher will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be



interviewed. Pupils should normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that s/he would prefer that parents/guardians were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If a member of staff is complained against, they must have the opportunity to present their case (see General Principles).

- 2.4 The Headteacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 2.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Headteacher will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within five weeks of receiving the letter.
- 2.6 If the complaint is against the Headteacher, or if the Headteacher has been closely involved at Stage 1, the Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing Body will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- 3.1 The Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the governing body to review the complaint. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that three members of the school's governing body will hear the complaint within twenty days of receiving the complaint. The letter will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be sent to the three members.
- 3.2 A meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel will be convened. No governors with prior involvement must be included on the panel and it may be necessary to use reserves (previously agreed by the governing body) to ensure the Panel can meet within the set time. If she has not previously been involved the Chair should chair the Panel; otherwise the Vice-Chair should do so. Governors should bear in mind the advantages of having a parent governor on the panel, and will also want to be sensitive to issues of race and gender. **It is not appropriate for the Headteacher to sit on the Panel.**
- 3.3 The Chair/Vice-Chair will ensure the Panel hears the complaint within twenty working days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence relating to the complaint will be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair may prepare a thorough summary for sending to Panel members.
- 3.4 The Chair or clerk 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. The notification will also inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter and explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.



3.5 The Headteacher will be invited to attend the Panel meeting and will be asked to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. All concerned should receive any relevant documents including the Headteacher's report, including the complainant, at least five working days prior to the meeting. The Headteacher may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or person, subject to the discretion of the Chair.

3.6 The meeting should allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the school's response
- The Headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Headteacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response
- Panel members to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
- Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to approval of the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses
- Final statements by both the complainant and the Headteacher.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that it is properly minuted.

3.7 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and Headteacher that the Panel will consider its decision and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

3.8 The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and

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

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

3.10 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.

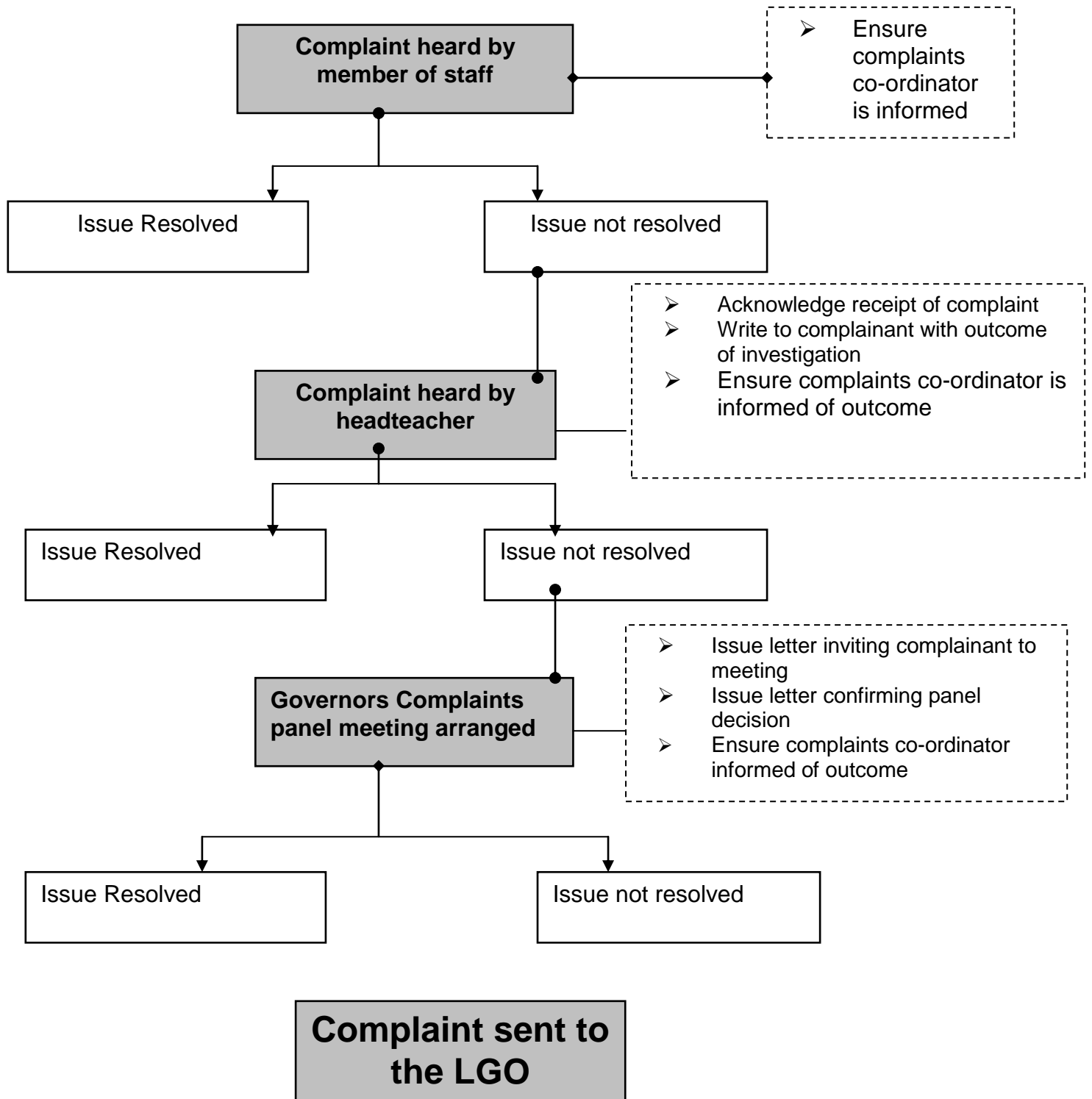
Stage 4 The complaint is sent to the Local Government Ombudsman

4.1 If a complainant wishes to go beyond the governors' complaints panel, they should be advised to write to the LGO. The LGO will then investigate and review as appropriate. Complainants can write, telephone or email the LGO. Please visit their website www.lgo.org.uk for more details.



Appendix 1

Flowchart of complaints





Appendix 2

Concerns and Complaints about the School Guidance Notes for Parents

If you have a concern or complaint

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what you are wanting to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's classteacher.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the Headteacher in the first instance you can contact him/her straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this, and can make one by ringing or calling into the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

What to do next

If you are dissatisfied with the teacher's initial response (or with the Headteacher's initial reaction if she has already been involved) you can make a complaint to the Headteacher. This should be made in writing.

If your complaint is about an action of the Headteacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors now. **(please address correspondence FAO Chair of Governors and hand in at the school office)**

The Headteacher will ask to meet you to discuss the problem. Again you may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish. The Headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved.

If you are still unhappy

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body to ask for a referral of your complaint to a Governors' Complaints Panel. It will then be heard by a group of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be given a fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting that the Headteacher will also attend. The General Complaints Procedures statement explains how these meetings operate.



Further Action

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to an outside body such as the **Local Government Ombudsman**. Again there is more on this in the General Complaints Procedure.



Appendix 3

Parents Complaints form

Please complete and return to Miss V Page (Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken	
Your Name	
Pupil's Name	
Your relationship to the Pupil	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Tel Number	
Please give details of your complaint here	
What actions, if any have you 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?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	
Signature	
Date	
For Office Use only	
Date acknowledgement sent	By Whom
Complaint referred to:	Date:

