



West Byfleet Junior School

Parental Concerns & Complaints

1. Introduction

We understand that from time to time, as a parent or someone with parental responsibilities, you may have a concern or complaint about a specific aspect of your child's schooling. This policy formally categorises these types of issues. The process, its stages and the roles and responsibilities of those involved, each stage to resolution in our administrative process.

We understand that these issues can be sensitive. They may arise from a difference of opinion, a miscommunication or a difference/unfamiliarity with a policy and its operational implementation and this can directly impact on your child. We feel it is in everyone's interest that matters are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and with the minimum impact on your child's education. Whatever the circumstances, the school wants you to feel confident about raising these matters. We promise that you will receive a fair, impartial and proportionate response.

2. Definitions of our categories of issues

Our categories issue with the school, a 'concern' and a 'complaint'.

A 'Concern' is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important enough to seek reassurances and/or clarity" concerns may vary in their impact and severity.

A 'Complaint' defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a perceived lack of action, or inaction." complaints may vary in their impact and severity.

3. Different categories of complaints

There are two types Informal and Formal, these are explained in depth in in section for but as a general you can only make an external complaint if you have exhausted all the steps in the informal process and you complaint is in nature related to the list in section 3.

There are some complaints that are dealt with only by Surrey County Council. A list of these are contained in section 4.

4. General information

Complaints against teaching staff

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Nominated Governor Lead: Full Governor Body

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Please be aware that a complaint about a teacher could – if justified - lead to disciplinary action being taken against them. For this reason, such matters will be handled through the procedure set out separately in the school's **Disciplinary Policy**. In such a case, we will tell you that your complaint is being dealt with through this separate process, and when it has been completed you will be told whether it was upheld or not - but you will not be privy to any specific disciplinary action that is taken (e.g. formal warning, dismissal or whatever.)

Records of concerns and complaints

Each of the above stages are regarded as 'informal', and with the intent of resolving issues with you quickly, positively and fairly, avoiding confrontation. You should be aware, however, that notes may be taken of any interviews or conversations to ensure that the issues are clear to all concerned and that the process is being followed effectively. For formal complaints, records of interviews and investigations are held by the school.

Monitoring complaints

The Governing Body will be informed regularly of the incidence and general nature of parental complaints that are taken beyond Step 1 above. We believe that this is an important element of the Governing Body's scrutiny role, and - from a practical point of view – ensures that any emerging themes are identified and addressed appropriately at the earliest opportunity.

5. How we deal with your concern or complaint

5.1 How to raise the matter

We understand that there may be occasions when parents may have difficulty discussing a concern directly with a particular member of staff. In these cases, you can request to speak to another member of staff. In these cases, you will be referred to an alternative and appropriate staff member. There may be an occasion that the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with your concern; in this case, you will be referred to a more appropriate staff member. This member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. Our prime desire is to consider and progress the matter objectively and impartially at whatever level it is dealt with to resolution. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the parental or those with parental responsibility who will initiate all process contained in this policy.

5.2 Working in partnership

The school believes in, and promotes an environment of effective communication between staff, Vernier's pupils, parents is essential for achieving high standards of education for children. We promote this with regular newsletters, home/school liaison books, termly parents 'evenings and an 'open' approach, a willingness to engage with parents on matters of concern at any time. We know that Parent Governors have a special contribution to make in helping to promote open and constructive communication and that part of a governance role is to be available to offer advice and support to parents, on both collective and individual issues. Therefore, we urge parents to raise with their child's class teacher and at the earliest possible opportunity, any concerns that they may have *and to do this without involving the child concerned*;

6. The process

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Procedure for sharing of parents 'concerns and complaints

6.1 Informal - Internal

If you have a query, a concern or a complaint about your child's experience at West Byfleet Junior School this procedure explains the stages you can go through to resolve such concerns. Steps 1-4 are handled within the school.

First Step - informal

Please discuss your concerns with your child's class teacher. You may want to make a specific appointment to do this (arranged direct or through the School Office) or you may find that other informal opportunities arise, such as when you collect your child from school, or you are visiting the school for other reasons. The staff member will record your concern.

Resolution

If it is resolved without the need to progress further, this record will be used to track and monitor future like concerns and identify if any patterns arise in order that they can be addressed. Experience has shown that most issues can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily at this informal stage, often simply by clarifying points of view or by offering clear explanations for actions taken.

Progression

However, if you are still unhappy, you can go to the next stage.

Second Step - informal

Please contact the Headteacher for an appointment to discuss the problem, or alternatively you can put your concern in writing to her. It is the wish and duty of the Headteacher to investigate any concern or complaint by a parent and she will look into the issues you have raised and respond to you once the relevant facts have been established; she will try to do this within one week of your raising the issue with her, should there be any delay she will contact you to explain the reason for the delay and discuss and agree a revised timeline.

Resolution

If it is resolved without, the need to progress further, this record will be used to track and monitor future like concerns and identify if any patterns arise in order that they can be addressed.

Progression

In the unlikely event that the Headteacher has been unable to resolve the issues to your Satisfaction, then you can go to the next stage. You will have to complete a 'Concern Form' shown in Appendix 1 and return it to the Headteacher.

Third Step - informal

Please write to the Chairman of the Governing Body with your concerns. They (or a Nominated Governor) will investigate and respond directly to you. We aim to complete this Stage within fourteen days of receiving your letter. If there is delay, the governor dealing with the complaint will contact you to explain the reason for the delay and

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discuss and agree a revised timeline.

Resolution

If it is resolved without the need to progress further, this record will be used to track and monitor future like concerns and identify if any patterns arise in order that they can be addressed.

Progression

If, through these three stages of informal discussion, you are still not satisfied with our response, then a more formal process will need to be pursued, as described below.

Formal and Fourth Step

A formal complaint will only be heard when all the previous stages (outlined above) have been undertaken and remain unresolved. Happily, very few parental concerns reach this stage, but nevertheless you should be aware that you do have this further stage (and beyond) open to you.

In this case, you will need to write again to the chair of the Governing Body stating that you wish to make a **formal complaint**. Please use the formal complaint form in Appendix 1

The process is what makes this stage more formal in that;

i the Governing Body will convene a small panel of governors (who have not been involved previously) to look in detail at the issues you raise

ii. you may be invited to attend a meeting to present your case and to discuss your complaint

iii. the Headteacher and/or teacher concerned would also have the opportunity to present their case

iv. written statements may be asked for

v. either you or the panel may request a representative from Surrey County Council to be present at this meeting to act in an advisory capacity

vi. the panel, on hearing all the facts, will then make a decision as to what action to take: you will be told, by letter **and within three days of the hearing**, of the outcome(s) of their investigation and the panel's decision and you will be given as much information as possible about the findings and the proposed course of action.

Within Surrey, for most complaints about a school, the decision of the Governors is the last stage of the procedure. However, there are certain types of complaints for which another external stage is open to you.

6.2 External complaint criteria

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This can only be exercised in relation to complaints relating to the matters listed below and refer to aspects of school life, as defined under section 23 of the Education Reform Act.

These are:

- Complaints about the National Curriculum
- Collective worship
- Religious education
- Non-approved external qualifications or syllabuses
- Provision of information
- Temporary withdrawal of pupils from part or all of the National Curriculum

If your complaint is in this category and you have completed the first four stages in the procedure outlined above i.e. Internal informal, you have a right of appeal beyond the school, to the County Council's decision-making Executive.

In these circumstances, you should contact the Council using the various details below for information on what to do next.

6.3 Other matters

If you wish to complain about the following:

- Admissions or transfers
- Exclusions
- home to school transport
- Special education needs

Please telephone Surrey County Council contact centre (details below) to discuss your concerns and what action you may take.

5. Contact numbers and advice:

- To contact any of the staff or Governors of West Byfleet Junior School, please ring the School Office - **01932 348961**

- If you wish to write to the School (to the Headteacher or to the Chairman of the Governing Body) the address is:

West Byfleet Junior School
Camphill Road
West Byfleet
Surrey. KT14 6EF

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▪ If you wish to discuss concerns or to take a complaint to Surrey County Council (as set out in paragraph 3 above) call Surrey County Council Contact Centre – [0300 200 1004](tel:03002001004), Alternatively, email contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk, or write to Contact Centre, Surrey County Council, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2DN

You may also wish to discuss any concerns you have, with the following: Your local county councillor – for contact details call [03456 009 009](tel:03456009009)

The Local Government Ombudsman – the Commission for Local Administration is an independent body, which will investigate complaints of maladministration against local authorities. For a leaflet on what maladministration is, and the steps necessary to pursue a complaint, contact them at Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4QP; or ring [020 7217 4620](tel:02072174620)

If you feel that the county council has acted unreasonably or failed in its duties under the Education Acts, you may write to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (but you must have completed Steps 1-4 of the procedure, above, before doing so). The Secretary of State also has the power to direct a Local Education Authority to change its decision in cases where they consider that the Authority has acted unreasonably. The address to write to is: The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT.

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Appendix 1: Concern Form

If you have a concern and wish to notify a class teacher or Headteacher, please use the following form. This is for stage 2 of the procedures.

Your name:		
Pupil's name and class		
Your relationship to the pupil		
Contact details		
Please give details of your concern		
No.	Details of concern	What action if any has been taken by the school to resolve the matter and by whom?
What actions do you feel may be right to help resolve the concern at this stage?		
Signature		Date

Appendix 2: Complaint Form

If you have a formal complaint please use this form as for Stage 4 of the procedures.

Your name:		
Pupil's name and class		
Your relationship to the pupil		
Contact details		
Please give details of your concern		
No.	Details of concern	What action if any has been taken by the school to resolve the matter and by whom?
What actions do you feel may be right to help resolve the concern at this stage?		

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Date