



# West Byfleet Junior School

## Parental Concerns & Complaints

### 2019

#### 1. Policy statement

##### *Context*

This school believes that an environment of effective communication between staff, pupils, parents and governors is essential for achieving high standards of education for the children. We aim to promote good communications through the use of regular newsletters, home/school liaison books, parents' evenings each term and a willingness to speak to all parents on all matters of concern at any time. We also believe that Parent Governors have a special contribution to make in helping to promote open and constructive communication, generally and specifically, between parents, staff and the governing body and that part of their role is to be available to offer advice and support to parents, on both collective and individual issues.

##### *Practice*

However, from time to time, as a parent, you may have a query or concern about a specific aspect of your child's schooling. Such issues can be sensitive: they may arise from a difference of opinion or a difference over policy and practice. Whatever the circumstances, the school wants you to feel confident about raising such queries and concerns and promises that you will receive a fair and serious response.

The school has therefore developed this policy statement, through which:

- we support the view that most concerns and difficulties can be resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis, through discussion with the school staff;
- 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**;
- we believe it is important to have a clear and simple process that all parents, staff and Governors can have confidence in, for raising, responding to and resolving such concerns;
- we set out (below) the stages that you can go through to resolve any such concerns;
- we undertake to monitor complaints and action taken, as part of the Governing Body's regular business.

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*Policy:* Parental Concerns & Complaints  
*Nominated Staff Lead:* Lesley Lawrence  
*Nominated Governor Lead:* Chair of Governors

*Status:* Statutory  
*Review cycle:* 2 yearly

*Next review date:* Summer 2021

## 2. Procedure for sharing of parents' concerns and complaints - 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.

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. 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 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.

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.

### *Third Step - informal*

Please write to the Chairman of the Governing Body with your concerns. He (or a nominated Governor) will investigate and respond directly to you. We aim to complete this stage within fourteen days of receiving your letter.

*Each of the above stages will be regarded as 'informal', with the intent of resolving issues with you quickly, positively and in a light-handed manner, avoiding confrontation or injured feelings. 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.*

*(Also, 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.)*

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*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.*

#### *Fourth Step - formal*

A formal complaint will only be heard when all the previous stages have been undertaken yet the issue still remains 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 to the Governing Body (again, via the Chairman) stating that you wish to make a **formal complaint**. What makes this stage more formal is 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.*

### **3. Raising an issue externally**

#### *External appeal - curriculum and related matters only*

Certain complaints may relate to aspects of school life, as defined under section 23 of the Education Reform Act. These are:

- complaints about the National Curriculum
- collective worship

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- 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, 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 on the number below for information on what to do next.

*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.

**4. 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<sup>1</sup>. 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. 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:

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<sup>1</sup> This regular reporting will not refer to the specifics of individual cases but, rather, to a summary of the number of complaints and their general subject matter. This is in order to ensure the independence and objectivity of individual members of the Governing Body, who may be involved in the hearing of an individual complaint at subsequent stages of the procedure.

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

- 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**
  - or email [contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:contactcentre@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
  
  - 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**
  
- 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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