Parkside
Primary School

Complaints Policy

Reviewed September 2026

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Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that all staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Since 1st September 2003 Governing Bodies of all maintained schools and maintained Nursery schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. It is also a requirement by law that this policy is published on our website.

Aims and Objectives

At Parkside we aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interest of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.
A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

The Complaints Process

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at Parkside, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All of our teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Lisa Cousins the Headteacher, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to William Nisbet, Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Anonymous complaints
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaints received outside of term time
We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Parkside Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with London Borough of Waltham Forest 02084963000
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) via London Borough Waltham Forest. 02084963000 .
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.

	The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Parkside Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Serial Complaints

There are occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure being followed that the complainant remains dissatisfied and requests that the matter is re-opened. The school will notify the complainant that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant raises the issue again, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond.

The decision to stop responding will not be taken lightly. We will take the following into consideration before implementing this procedure:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position
- The complainant is repeatedly making the same points each time, all of which have been dealt with.

The case to stop responding will be implemented sooner if:

- Letters, emails or telephone calls are abusive or aggressive
- Insulting personal comments or threats are made towards staff
- The case has already been referred to the Department for Education.

Stages of Complaint

There are 4 stages to the nationally accepted procedure:

Procedures for dealing with general concerns

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures.

Stage 1 (informal): discussion with the class teacher

Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by the Headteacher;

Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by the Chair of Governors.

Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by the GB's complaints appeal panel

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

Stage1 – Your initial contact with the school

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when they are known to the school. The first point of contact should be the child's class teacher.
2. Contact could be made face to face, by telephone or in writing as soon as possible after the concern is made known to the school. All members of staff know how to refer, if necessary to the appropriate person with responsibility for particular issues raised by the complainant. This would then be confirmed in writing.
3. The complainant should be updated on the progress of the school's enquiries (within 10 working days) and will have the opportunity to have their matter considered further once a response has been made
4. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following this informal approach, the concern will become a formal complaint and the school will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage 2 – Formal consideration of your complaint

1. The written complaint should be addressed to the Headteacher. If, however, the complaint concerns the Headteacher personally, it should be sent to William Nisbet, Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
2. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing, with a copy of the school's procedures as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within three working days.
3. A full response should be made to the complainant within ten working days. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, then the complainant should be informed of the reason for the delay.
4. If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
5. As part of the consideration of the complaint, the complainant might be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint
6. The Headteacher, or Chair of Governors, may also be accompanied by a suitable person in they wish.
7. Following the meeting, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the school would talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
8. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
9. Once the relevant facts have been established, a written response would be sent to the complainant. This will give a full explanation of the Headteacher or Chair of Governors decision and the reasons for it.
10. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Parkside Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.
11. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation and the school's findings, they could request to proceed to Stage 3, as described below.
12. A written record will be kept of any meetings/interviews in relation to the investigation.
13. The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Governing Body Review Panel

- If the concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and the complainant is not happy with the outcome, the Chair of Governors will instruct the Clerk to the Governing Body to set up a complaints committee to consider it. This is a formal process.
- The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complainant an opportunity to have their complaint heard in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.
- The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors who have had noprior involvement in the complaint.

- The aim of a complaints committee is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The complaints committee operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The clerk to the governing body will aim to arrange for the committee meeting to take place within 20 working days.
2. The complainant would be asked whether they wish to provide any further written documentation in support of their complaint. It can include witness statements, or the complainant could ask witnesses to give evidence in person.
3. The Headteacher will prepare a written report for the committee. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
4. The clerk will inform the parent, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the committee by letter, at least five working days in advance of the meeting. All parties will receive the same written documentation. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With the agreement of the chair of the committee, the Headteacher may invite any member of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to attend the meeting.
5. No evidence or witnessed previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
6. The chair of the committee will ensure that the meeting in properly minuted. The complainant can request a copy of the minutes, this is at the panel's discretion.
7. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
8. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
    - You to explain your complaint;
    - You to hear the school's response from the Headteacher;
    - You to question the Headteacher about the complaint;
    - You to be questioned by the Headteacher about the complaint
    - The committee members to be able to question you and the Headteacher;
    - Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
    - You and the Headteacher to make a final statement.
9. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the Headteacher and yourself within two weeks. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
10. The committee will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
    - Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
    - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
    - Recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems, or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
11. The clerk will send you and the Headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the committee within two weeks.

12. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Stage 4 – Appeal to the Department of Education

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under Education Law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Parkside Primary School. They will consider whether Parkside Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Extended Services (Breakfast and After School Clubs

A parent/carer who has any issues about any aspect of the breakfast club or after school club should initially address their concerns with the senior member of staff for the club:

- Deborah Murphy Breakfast club
- Joanne Ginn After school club

If a parent/carer is not satisfied or the problem persists the parent/carer should request an appointment with the Headteacher or put their concerns or complaint in writing to the Headteacher and the above procedures will apply.

Monitoring and review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis in the summer term.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed and approved annually by the Finance and Personnel Committee and reported to the Full Governing Body.

Updated September 2026

Signed by: ……....Chair of Governors