



Northop Hall CP School Complaints Policy

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| School | Northop Hall C.P. School |
| Date policy approved and adopted | October 2023 |
| Review frequency | Annually |
| Next review date | October 2024 |
| Safeguarding Designated Senior Person (DSP) | <i>Lynne Harrison</i> |
| Head teacher | <i>Lynne Harrison</i> |
| Chair of Governors | <i>Michael Hughes</i> |

1. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Northop Hall Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

1.1 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'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Northop Hall Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We ask that parents raise concerns in a polite, calm manner. Any parent who is acting in an aggressive or intimidating manner will be asked to leave school premises. No serious concern should be raised face to face without making an appointment first. In order to ensure that the school remains a safe place for pupils and adults it is essential that parents do not try to enter the classrooms, other working areas or headteacher's office to raise a concern without prior arrangement and agreement.

In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address these directly to the key stage leader or to the head teacher. If the complaint is about the headteacher it should be taken to the to the chair of the governing body.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, seek advice from the school office or the clerk to the governing body.

We understand however, that there are occasions, when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Northop Hall Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

2. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, one of our Key Stage Leaders or the Headteacher. Concerns about the Chair of Governors should be directed to Maureen Potter (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office.

Concerns about any individual governor should be raised with the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. 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 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to 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 Mr. Michael Hughes (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

3. Anonymous complaints

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

4. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

5. 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.

6. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

| Exceptions | Whom to contact |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to school • Statutory assessments of special educational needs • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a child protection investigation | <p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with Flintshire County Council.</p> <p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion from school | <p>Parents and carers may use procedures to challenge permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions of more than five days in a given term.</p> <p>Concerns about the process followed can be raised via the Complaints Procedure.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing | <p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures | Schools must have staff grievances, discipline and conduct procedures in place. Complainants are not informed of the outcomes of actions under this procedure. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises or facilities | Providers should be contacted directly and have their procedures for such eventualities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content | Please contact the Welsh Department for Education and skills |

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 Northop Hall 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.

7. Resolving concerns

The person receiving the concern (class teacher, Key Stage leader, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher, Clerk to the Governing Body, or Chair of Governors) should firstly consider whether the concern can be addressed informally, or if it would require further investigation to address the issue raised. In this case, the concerned party should be asked to make formal complaint instead, preferably using the complaint form below.

Informal concerns can usually be resolved with reassurance, answering a query, or an informal discussion. If the person receiving the concern believes that it is necessary to involve any other person in resolving the concern, they should carefully consider whether the concern is actually a complaint that requires an investigation.

In the event that any other person needs to become involved to resolve the concern, the person who has raised the concern must be informed before details of their concern are shared.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Northop Hall Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing

10. Raising a concern or complaint

Informal stage

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. However, if a concern cannot be resolved through the informal stage the next stage is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to relevant person as specified in the section 'How to Raise A Concern or Make A Complaint'. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The complaint handler will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the complaint handler will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The complaint handler can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: If the complaint is being dealt with by the headteacher, the headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the complaint handler will provide a formal written response within 25 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the complaint handler is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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 Northop Hall Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The complaint handler will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of

the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 25 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Northop Hall Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Northop Hall Community Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education and Skills if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Northop Hall Community Primary School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 Northop Hall Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

11. Next Steps

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 and skills after they have completed Stage 2.

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

The complainant can refer their complaint to the local authority customerservices@flintshire.gov.uk
01352 703020

Complaint forms are provided to assist you.

You should include details that might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope, to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the head teacher or clerk to the governing body, as appropriate.

The head teacher or member of the senior leadership team or chair of governors may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by one other person, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

Model forms: Model Forms follow for use by Parents

Stage 1:Northop Hall CP School -

This form is designed to help concerns to be resolved in a calm and purposeful manner. Please complete and return to the school office.

| | |
|--|--|
| Your name: | |
| Pupil's name: | |
| Relationship with the school (i.e which child are you the parent or carer for) | |
| <i>Please note complaints or concerns may only be raised by the parent/carer of a pupil</i> | |
| Your address: | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address: | |
| I wish to meet with _____ (insert name of the member of staff) to discuss the following matter. | |
| Brief details of topic to be discussed: | |
| | |

| | |
|--|------|
| | |
| Dates/times when it would be most convenient for a meeting | |
| Signed (parent/carer) | Date |
| School use | |
| Date form received: | |

Stage 2: Northop Hall CP School – Formal Complaint Form

This form is designed to help concerns to be resolved in a calm and purposeful manner. Please complete this form, and return it to the school office or to the head teacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

| | |
|--|--|
| Your name: | |
| Pupil's name: | |
| Relationship with the school (i.e which child are you the parent or carer for) | |
| Please note complaints or concerns may only be raised by the parent/carer of a pupil | |
| Your address | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address | |
| Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated: | |
| | |

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (ie who have you spoken with or written to, and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signed (parent/carer)

Date

School use only

Date form received:

Date Acknowledgement sent

Acknowledgement sent by:

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Complaint referred to: | | | |
| Date: | | | |

Northop Hall CP School – Complaint review request form

Please complete this form, and return it to the head teacher (or clerk to the Governing Body) who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Dear Sir/Madam

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on, and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to and I received a response from on

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the response(s) from the school. I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because.....

(You may attach additional pages if you wish)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

| | |
|--|-------|
| Signature | Date: |
| <i>School use only</i> Date form received: Date Acknowledgement sent: Acknowledgement sent by: | |

Model letters for school/chair of governors to use

Response to spurious complainant not genuine, authentic, or true; not from the claimed, pretended, or proper source; counterfeit.

Dear [insert name of complainant]

Thank you for submitting your concern in the letter received on [insert date]. After careful consideration, I'm unable to deal with this matter under the governing body's complaints procedure. This is because *[we suggest you include one of the following statements:]*

The substance of your complaint has been addressed under the complaints procedure already.

OR

The concerns you have raised do not fall within the scope of this procedure [suggest an alternative procedure. For example, admissions policy, exclusion policy, behaviour policy, grievance procedure, etc]

If you wish for my decision to be reviewed, you can follow the school's formal complaint procedure by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely,

Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint and invitation to meet

Dear [Insert name of complainant]

I have received your formal complaint, dated and I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore, I would like to meet with you, as soon as possible, so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. You are welcome to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend if you would find this helpful.

Please telephone..... to arrange an appointment **OR** I can offer you an appointment at on Please let me know if this is convenient.

I hope we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not, I will ensure the appropriate investigation takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Or Chair of Governing Body

Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint referred by a third party [eg LA, Diocese, MP]

Dear [Insert name of complainant]

I have received a copy of the documentation that you sent in to setting out a complaint about This has been passed to the school because it has responsibility for these matters.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore, I would like to meet with you so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. Please telephone to arrange an appointment **OR** I can offer you an appointment at on Please let me know if this is convenient.

Meanwhile, I'd be grateful if you would complete and return the formal complaint form that is enclosed, along with details of the school's complaints procedure.

I hope we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not, I will ensure the appropriate investigation takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint and advising complainant that the matter is being dealt with under a confidential school procedure

Dear

I have received your formal complaint dated and I am grateful you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore, I have initiated an immediate investigation. It is possible that the investigator will wish to meet with you to clarify the evidence that you have provided so far. If so, they will write to you to make suitable arrangements.

Because your concerns relate to the conduct/capability of a member of staff, the investigation will be carried out under the school's personnel procedures. This means the detail of the procedure and its outcome must remain confidential to the school and the member of staff concerned.

OR

Because your concerns relate to the behaviour of a pupil, the investigation will be carried out under the school's pupil conduct and disciplinary procedures. This means the detail of the procedure and its outcome must remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child concerned.

In due course, I may be able to provide you with some information about the outcomes of the investigation and the processes that have been followed, but in any event, I'll let you know when the matter has been concluded.

If I can be of any further assistance, do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

Notification of decision regarding formal complaint

Dear

Following receipt of your complaint and careful consideration of all the available relevant evidence, the panel has concluded that:

The concern is not substantiated by the evidence in that OR

The concern was substantiated in part/full because The school will review its practices/procedures..... with the intention of avoiding any reoccurrence. Parents

will be informed in due course of any policy changes. OR

To address fully the matters investigated, the school has initiated appropriate internal procedures. Due to the nature of these procedures, their outcome must remain strictly confidential. We are confident, however, the circumstances that gave rise to your complaint should not be repeated.

OR

To address fully the matters of concern you identified, the panel recommended that the governing body should review its..... policy as a matter of urgency. We are confident this should prevent similar concerns arising in future.

I hope this will now conclude the matter and we can look to the future working together for the benefit of your child's and the school.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher/Chair of governing body/Chair of panel

Review outcome notification

Dear

After careful consideration of your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the governing body's complaints review panel has concluded the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint.

Summary of reasons Therefore, we now consider the matter closed.

OR

After careful consideration of your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the governing body's complaints review panel has concluded the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except

..... . Therefore, the following action will be taken

Once this action has been completed, the school will consider the matter to be closed.

OR

After careful consideration of your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the governing body's complaints review panel has concluded the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except

.....

However, the panel determined this procedural failure did not affect the outcome of the consideration of your complaint, so while we regret this error, we will now

consider this matter to be closed as far as the school is concerned. Yours sincerely,

Chair of complaints review panel
c.c. Head teacher Chair of governors