



'Where Every Door is Opened and Every Gift is Unlocked'

At Witton we are a partnership of school, church, home, the Diocese and community. We create a stimulating and caring environment, grounded in Christian belief and practice, so that all members of our school community can flourish. We all appreciate and value what it means to be a positive member of a diverse and multicultural community. Time is taken to value and nurture each child educationally, creatively and spiritually. Children and staff are encouraged to aim for '*Everyday Excellence*' and believe in themselves. Understanding and valuing their self-worth and the importance of their place and purpose in our community to be the person they are fully capable of being.

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY 2018

Making a Comment, Compliment or Complaint

We are committed to providing a high quality accessible service and operate a 'Comment, Compliment or Complaint' scheme which sets out our policy and procedures for dealing with all sorts of feedback from families, agencies, friends and neighbours within the community.

We aim to improve continuously the quality of our service for all of our community and welcome all comments which will assist us in doing this.

Please refer to our Complaints Protocol if you need to make a complaint about any aspect of our service.

RATIONALE

Under Section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), Governing Bodies of all maintained schools in England have been required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint; taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. The formal procedures will need to be invoked only when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

AIMS

We will endeavour to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and will always put the interests of our children above all else. We will give careful consideration to all complaints and we aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Our complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;

- advise that all complaints shall be considered whether made for example in writing, by email or, in person or by telephone
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team and governors so that services can be improved.

Dealing with complaints and initial concerns

If a parent has a concern it will be taken seriously and time will be taken at the earliest time to ensure every opportunity has been investigated to try to resolve the matter.

GUIDELINES

For a general complaint or concern:

Step 1

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

Step 2

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the head teacher. The head teacher will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

Step 3

Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the head teacher should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the chair of governors via the school office.

For a complaint about the head teacher:

Step 1

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the behaviour, leadership or management of the head teacher, they should, in the first instance, discuss the

matter with the head teacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way.

Step 2

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the head teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the chair of the governing body. The chair will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

Step 3

Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the chair should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the governing body via the clerk to the governors (the Bursar, via the school office).

For a complaint about a school governor:

Any complaint made against the Chair of Governors or another member of the Governing body should be made in writing to the clerk to the Governing Body (Elaine Davies). Where a complaint is against the Chair of Governors or another governor the complaint will move straight to step 3 of the procedure.

If parents/carers are abusive or their behaviour towards staff is threatening during the process then the head teacher or Chair of Governors may write to them to revoke their licence onto school grounds for a short period of time.

Complaints regarding Religious Education or Collective Worship

Informal Stages Concerns expressed by parents and others should be dealt with, as far as possible by informal discussions with teachers and the head teacher. At this stage the LA could be involved in trying to resolve the issue informally.

Formal Stages

- if the concern is not resolved at the informal stage then it becomes a complaint and is considered by the governing Body or a panel thereof
- if the concern is not resolved by the Governing Body then the complainant may approach the SACRE and ask them to investigate the matter within school

In the event the complainant and/or SACRE remain dissatisfied with the schools response to the complaint then either may refer the matter to the Secretary of State for consideration. If the matter has not already been through a SACRE investigation the Secretary for State may ask that they investigate.

The following information can also be viewed on the LA website:

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Cheshire West and Chester Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

What is SACRE?

The SACRE is the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Its main function is to advise the local authority on matters related to collective worship in community schools and religious education in accordance with the agreed syllabus.

Where to find help

- clerk to Cheshire West and Chester Council SACRE – Alison Williams, Email alison.williams@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- Religious Education Advisor – Jane Brooke, Email scrolls2@btinternet.com

Why is there SACRE?

In 1944, when religious education became a compulsory subject on the curriculum, local authorities were given the power to set up SACREs in order to decide what was taught in RE (also called religious instruction, religious knowledge, scripture or divinity). When the 1988 Education Act confirmed religious education as part of the basic curriculum, it became a duty for every local authority (LA) to appoint a SACRE. Religious education is the only compulsory subject in schools which remains locally determined.

What are the duties of a SACRE?

SACRE's main duty is to advise the local authority on religious education and collective worship for schools within its remit.

SACRE should also:

- Require the local authority to review its agreed syllabus every five years
- Consider requests from schools to be released from the requirement to provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (a determination)
- Publish an annual report of its work
- Monitor the provision and quality of the agreed syllabus, and of collective worship
- Meet in public, unless confidential information is to be disclosed
- Record minutes of all meetings
- Provide advice and support on teaching the agreed syllabus

Governing body complaints committee

The governing body must consider all written complaints **within 21 school working days** of receipt.

The Chair of Governors will nominate a governor to co-ordinate the procedure and will appoint a **complaints panel** consisting of 3 governors who are not employees of the school. The nominated co-ordinator will chair the complaints panel.

The co-ordinator will arrange a meeting of the complaints panel to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting so that they can explain the complaint in more detail. The school will give the complainant at least five days' notice of the meeting. If the complainant cannot attend the suggested date, a further date will be set. If the complainant does not attend the second date, a third

and final date will be set, at which time the meeting will proceed without the complainant present.

The head teacher will write a report addressing the complaint and ensure that the complaints panel members and the complainant receive a copy 4 days before the meeting. (If it is a complaint about the head teacher, the Chair of Governors will write the report).

The complainant is invited to write a report addressing the issue and must ensure that the complaints panel members and the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) receives a copy 2 days before the meeting. Other written evidence will be not be accepted at the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances.

Check list for a panel hearing

The panel must take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint (with the support of parent partnership or other advocate if required);
- the panel members and head teacher (or Chair of Governors) may ask questions;
- the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to explain the school's actions (with support of DHT, SENCO or other supporter if required);
- the panel members or complainant may ask questions;;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- the chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 3 working days;
- both parties leave the meeting while the panel decides on the issues.

When the panel has fully investigated the complaint, the chair of the panel, on behalf of the governing body, will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the complaint and any agreed action to be taken.

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint should make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;

- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

Use of Social Media

The school will contact any parents/carers if a detrimental comment about a situation or a member of staff in school occurs on a social networking site to ascertain whether it is a concern which could be dealt with in school. School reserve the right to contact the owners of the social networking site and request the removal of this information. If this comment is racially motivated or can be classified as a 'hate' crime, Police will be contacted immediately.

Matters outside the scope of a Complaints Procedure

The following procedure applies to complaints for which there is no other procedure available. Please find the **exceptions** listed below for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

EXCEPTION	WHO TO CONTACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admissions authority (Witton Church Walk Governing Body). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for our employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 3155, via email at whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	These matters will invoke our internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may school premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about their service

Serious and Persistent Complaints

If properly followed our Complaints Procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, our Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the complainant may be regarded as serial or persistent and we may not choose to respond.

Government guidance recommends that we should be able to answer yes to the following questions before electing to cease correspondence on matter:

- the school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainants needs;
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of the schools position and their options (if any) and;
- they are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

The case is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements;

- the school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience – have they actually said as much in a letter, email or telephone call?
- Their letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive and aggressive.

If the decision to stop responding is taken, the complainant must be informed in writing by the Governing Body.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure we will look for a way in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

If you believe that the Governing Body has acted unreasonably, you can complain in writing to the Secretary of State for education.

Unresolved complaints

From 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the LA should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

Further information can be obtained by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to:

Department for Education
School Complaints Unit
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Policy agreed November 2018 by FGB

COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to Mrs K Magiera, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address:
Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already 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 at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

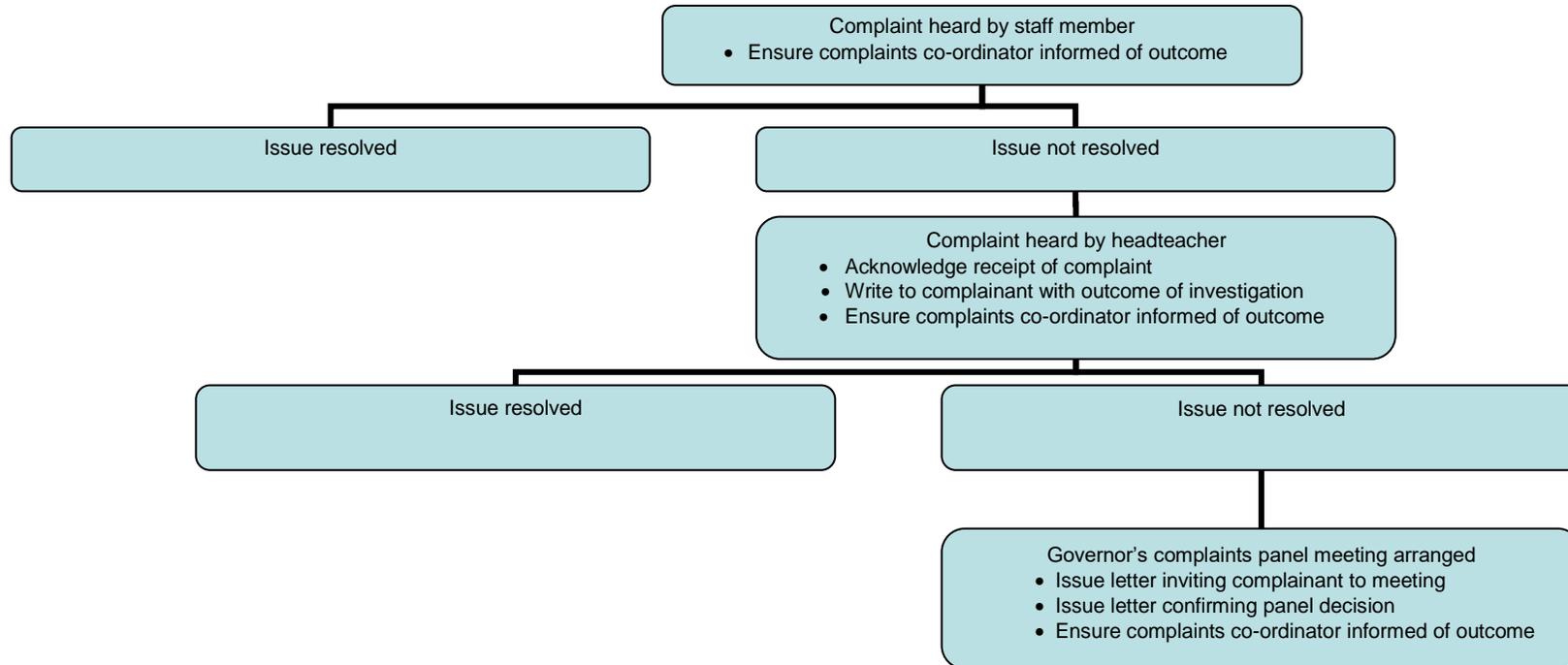
Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Summary of Dealing with Complaint



Summary of Dealing with Complaint against Head Teacher

