

## Complaints Policy

### **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at Coppetts Wood Primary School, but it is not limited to them. Any member of the public may make a complaint to Coppetts Wood about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

### **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 opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Coppetts Wood 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, the office staff will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the office staff 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 most important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Coppetts Wood will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

### **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 of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher; the ARP or Inclusion Leader (where more appropriate) or the Assistant Head Teacher with responsibility for the curriculum, and then the Deputy Head Teacher or Head Teacher.

### ***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 Head Teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Head Teacher via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'. Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to 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 such as 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 hold meetings with staff in accessible locations.

### Anonymous Complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### Duplicate Complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete. Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

### Complaint Campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants; or
- publish a single response on the school's website.

### Timescales

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

### 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 ends.

### Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Coppetts Wood, 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 reorganisation proposals should be raised with Barnet Local Authority.
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). LADO 0208 359 4528 MASH 0208 359 4066
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> .
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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> .  Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through



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	the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the local authority or the DfE (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 DfE at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

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 Coppetts Wood 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.

### Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Coppetts Wood 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.

### Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

### Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Head Teacher (unless they are about the Head Teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing or by telephone. The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation, the Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Head Teacher 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 Coppetts Wood will take to resolve the complaint.

The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher must be made to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Complaints about a 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 or the LA. At the conclusion of its 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 – by writing to the Chair who will pass on the complaint to 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 complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 2 must be made to the Chair, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the stage 1 response. The Chair 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 Complaint Committee will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Chair will keep the complainant informed.

The Complaints Committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to their meeting, they will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Coppetts Wood available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at stage 2.

The Complaints Committee will deal with the complaint through written representations and will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

The Complaints Committee will 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. The Complaints Committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Complaints 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 Complaints 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.



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The Chair of the Complaints Committee will provide the complainant and Coppetts Wood 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 DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Coppetts Wood.

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 Coppetts Wood will take to resolve the complaint.

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

**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 after they have completed Stage 2.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Coppetts Wood. They will consider whether Coppetts Wood has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on 0370 000 2288.

Revision History			
Version	Revision Date	Revised By	Revision
1.0	January 2021	Kirstie Barrett	New policy
1.1	April 2022	Kirstie Barrett	Changes to timeframes
Distribution			
Shared With			Date for next review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff via usual communication channels including at staff briefings and emailed and on our shared network for all to access</li> <li>Governors via Governor Hub and committee/full governor meetings</li> </ul>			Ongoing



## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your Contact Details (mobile number/email address):</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>
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<b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b>
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<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Official Use Only</b>	
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>	
<b>By who:</b>	
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	