FCJ Primary School

Complaints Policy

Mission Statement

Teach the children with all the kindness and gentleness possible.

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Author	Headteacher

Article 3: Acting in the best interest of the children in our care.

The FCJ Governors are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at every opportunity and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

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1 Introduction and guiding principles

At FCJ Primary School, we are committed to meeting the needs of our pupils. However, we recognise that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. The intention of this policy is to provide a clear and transparent process that will enable such complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately.

This policy has been approved by the Headteacher and the Governors of FCJ Primary School and is available on the FCJ Website or on request from the school office. It can be made available in large print or another more accessible format, if required. If assistance is needed with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, a parent should contact the school office, who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

All school staff are made aware of this policy and are expected to familiarise themselves with the procedures for dealing with complaints to ensure they can be of most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

The school's guiding principles in complaint resolution are:

1.1 to give careful and prompt consideration to all complaints

1.2 to seek to achieve a just and fair outcome, taking due account of all relevant evidence

1.3 to attempt to resolve complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and at as early a stage as possible.

2 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 FCJ Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

3 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 policy. FCJ 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, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we 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 understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, FCJ Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints policy.

4 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.

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 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 Governors via the school office. Please mark the envelope as Private and Confidential.

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.

5 Anonymous complaints

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

6 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.

7 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.

8 Scope of this complaints policy

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	In the first instant, concerns about admissions should be handled by contacting the School Admission Secretary
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.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints policy.
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.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, 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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

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

9 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, FCJ 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:

9.1 an explanation

9.2 an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better

9.3 an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur

9.4 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

9.5 an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

9.6 an apology

10 Withdrawal of a complaint

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

11 Stages of a complaint

This policy outlines three stages of complaint:

- Stage 1: Informal Resolution
- Stage 2: Formal Resolution
- Stage 3: Panel Hearing

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. A parent with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, to telephone, or write with the details of the issue that concerns them.

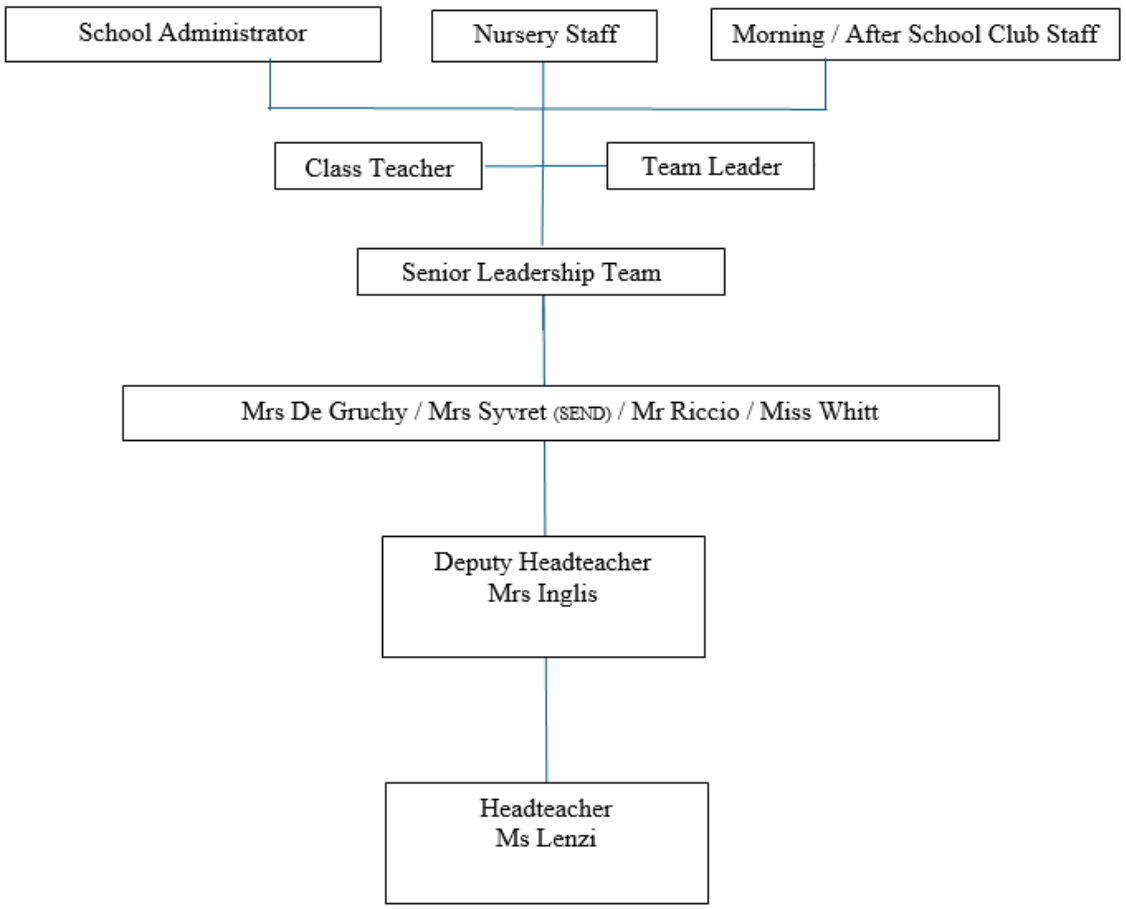
In the first instance, it is usually best to address an academic or pastoral concern to your child's class teacher or the Bursar if the issue is a financial matter, as they are often best placed to resolve the matter quickly. The parent may also refer a matter to the Headteacher or one of the Deputy Headteachers, either directly or after an initial discussion with the class teacher.

We will acknowledge a written notification of a concern by telephone, e-mail or by letter within two working days of receipt. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate member of staff

will arrange to speak with the complainant or invite them to a meeting within five working days of acknowledgement. This meeting may prompt further investigation or wider consultation but, in any

event, this stage of the complaints process should be completed within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

FCJ Communication Flowchart



Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days of acknowledgement or in the event that the parent and member of staff fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent will be advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If a complaint has not been resolved on an informal basis, then the parent should make a formal complaint. This must be done in writing, stating explicitly that he/she wishes to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the Headteacher within two days of being received. In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak to the parent concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary, however, for the Headteacher to conduct an investigation. Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing, no later than 15 working days after the formal complaint was acknowledged. The Headteacher will give reasons for the decision reached.

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. The complainant will be informed if due to exceptional circumstances any additional time is necessary to complete the investigation.

If the parent is still not satisfied with the decision, he/she should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaint's procedure.

Alternative procedure for handling formal complaints about the Headteacher.

A parent wishing to make a complaint about the Headteacher may do so by writing to the FCJ Chair of Governors at the school. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing, indicating what action is being taken and the likely timescale. The procedures and timescales that apply to any other formal complaint (see above) will be followed.

If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel under Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

If the parent wishes to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach a resolution earlier in the complaints process) they should write to the Clerk to the Governors, who is responsible for making the arrangements for a Panel Hearing, at the school address. In the written request for a Panel Hearing, the parent should state the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. He/she should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the school's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see; these documents should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors at least seven days before the date of the hearing. Copies of all such documents shall be supplied to all parties by the Clerk to the Governors not later than three working days before the hearing.

The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and will endeavour to schedule a meeting of the Panel within 15 working days thereafter, keeping the complainant informed if there are unavoidable reasons for a delay. The Panel appointed by the Chair

of Governors will consist of at least three people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the complaint, and will have no knowledge of the salient details. The parent may ask the Clerk of Governors to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the Panel ahead of the hearing. Fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular panel member.
The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative, but legal representation is not usually appropriate. If a parent wishes to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, the Clerk must be informed seven working days in advance of the hearing. The legally qualified person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations shall be confirmed in writing to the parent and, where relevant, to the person complained about within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection by the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors.

12 Record keeping and confidentiality

A record will be kept by the Headteacher of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld), and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required by the school or where any other legal obligations prevail. Records of individual complaints will be retained in accordance with data protection principles, thereafter only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

Senior leaders and Governors will maintain oversight of these records in order to determine the appropriate implementation of this policy and to respond to any patterns of complaints which may be apparent.

13 Monitoring and review of complaints policy and procedures

The Board of Governors will monitor the number and type of complaints received and the operation of the procedures set out in this policy. In the academic year 2024-2025, the school responded to one formal complaint. They will also review the policy at least annually to ensure it meets statutory requirements and continues to reflect best practice.