



# Westfield School

Inspire, Create, Achieve

## Complaints Policy

February 2016

## Complaints Policy

The Governing Body of Westfield School have the following policy when dealing with any complaint targeted towards members of staff, or the school as a whole:

### **Introduction:**

The fundamental objective of the school is to create and maintain a safe, happy and healthy learning environment where every pupil can achieve their full potential. Our ethos is to work in a spirit of co-operation between parents, guardians, staff and governors.

It is recognised that from time to time parents or guardians may have issues with the way the school discharges its responsibilities to meet its obligations, and these issues may be raised as complaints directly with the school.

In line with the requirements of the Education Act 2002, Westfield School will:

- Have a complaints procedure that is easily accessible, simple to use and easy to understand.
- Promote an open door policy where every parent can express their concerns to any member of staff.
- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Resolve all issues swiftly to established timescales, impartially and in a spirit of cooperation.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Ensure that the Governing Body regularly monitors complaints received by the school.

Westfield School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and the pastoral care provided for its pupils. However if parents do have concerns, they can expect any issues raised to be treated seriously by the school in accordance with this policy document.

All complaints will be investigated by an appropriate person; this may be a teacher, a senior member of staff, a governor or the Headteacher depending on the nature of the complaint. If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors (or a nominated individual) will investigate and may draw on East Sussex County Council for help and assistance.

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.

### **Child Protection**

Any allegations, concerns or complaints about staff, governors or volunteers in relation to Child Protection will be managed following the procedures identified within the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **For a general complaint:**

#### **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 Headteacher. The Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher:**

#### **Step 1**

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the behaviour, leadership or management of the Headteacher, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Headteacher; 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 Headteacher, 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 school office.

## **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 at least 2 governors who are not employees of the school. The nominated coordinator 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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher, 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 Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) receives a copy 2 days before the meeting. Other written evidence will not be accepted at the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Check list for a panel hearing**

The panel should note as guidance the following points:

- 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 Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) may ask questions;
- the Headteacher (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 Headteacher (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 panel 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.

### **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.

## **Monitoring Complaints**

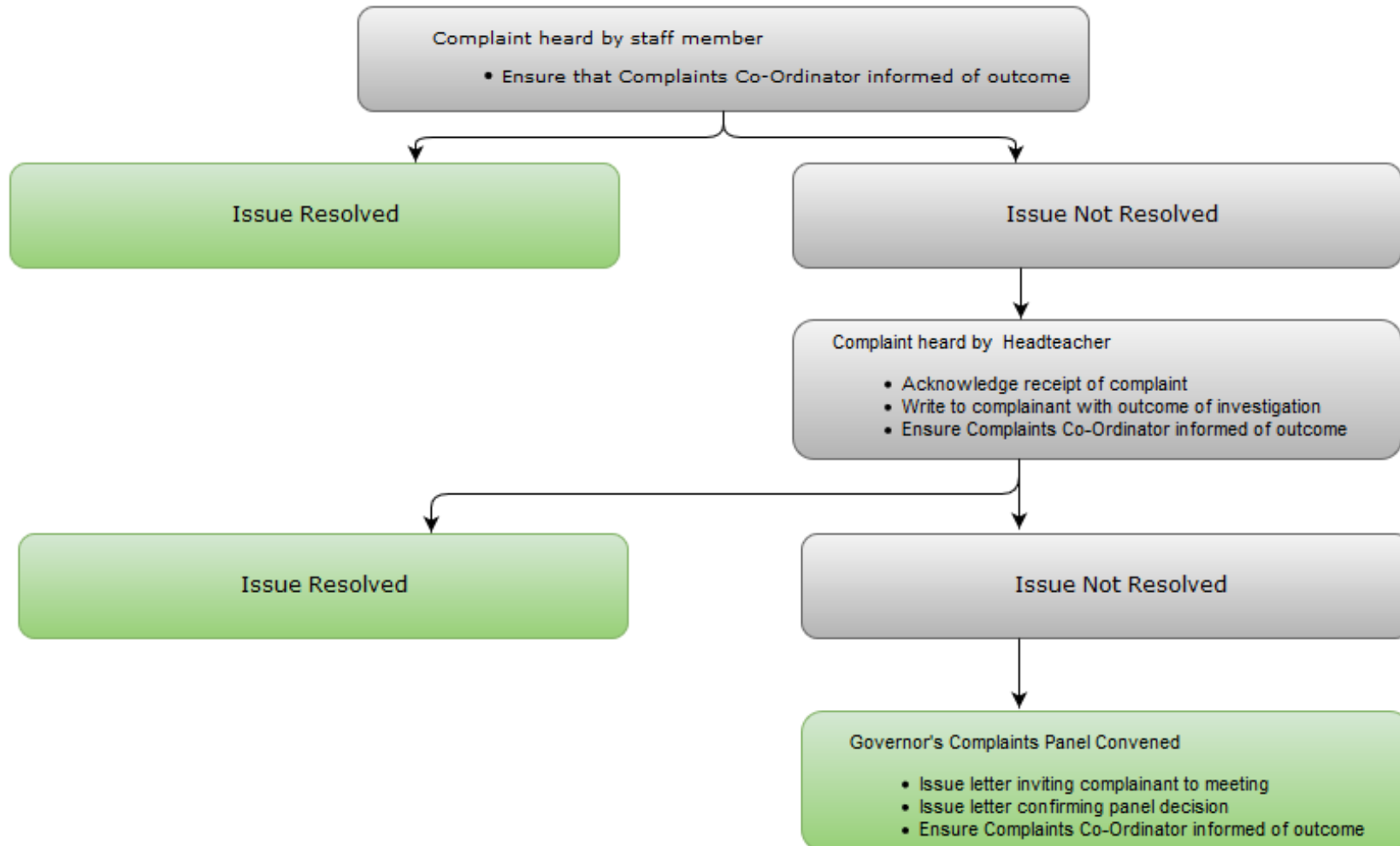
The Governing Body will review all complaints and recommended actions annually at a Full Governing Body Meeting. Any recommended actions will be forwarded to the appropriate committee for continued monitoring.

## **Unresolved Complaints**

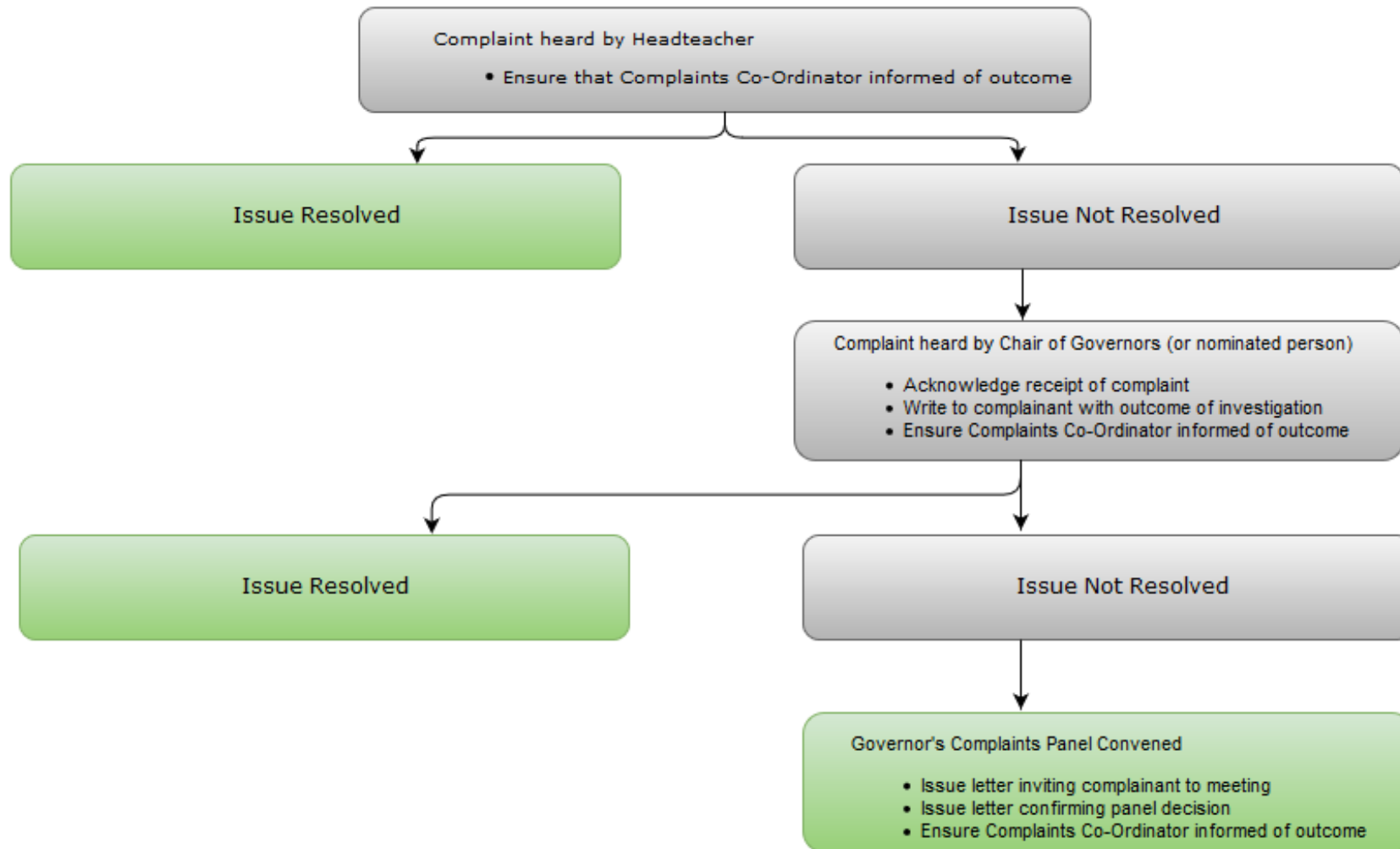
From 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the LA should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

**Policy to be reviewed: January 2018**

## Summary of Dealing with Complaint



## Summary of Dealing with Complaint against Headteacher





**WESTFIELD SCHOOL - COMPLAINT FORM**

Please complete and return to ..... (Complaints Co-Ordinator) 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: