

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This policy statement sets out our approach for dealing with parental/carer concerns and complaints.

We always aim to maintain positive relationships with parents/carers and do our best to address any concerns as soon as they arise. However we understand that in some instances a parent/carer may wish to make a complaint.

Complaints will not normally be considered if they relate to matters that over a year old

We will:

- Always treat a concern or complaint seriously and will seek a resolution or conclusion as soon as possible to the satisfaction of all parties, although it may not be possible to achieve this in every case
- Welcome feedback on what our parents feel we do well or not so well as a school
- Ensure that all members of staff in school are aware of this policy and will know the procedure if a parent/carer wishes to raise a complaint. In addition our governing body members will also have a copy of the procedure.
- Seek to have a resolution at school level to maintain the important home/school relationship
- Reserve the option to close a complaint before all stages of the school's procedures have been exhausted if this appears to be appropriate
- Review the procedures regularly and update where necessary
- Ensure that the procedure is displayed in easy to access places, such as the school office and the school website www.townfield.doncaster.sch.uk

We ask:

- That you inform the school as soon as possible about your concern or complaint – a form can be obtained from the school office for you to complete in the first instance and it is an appendix of this document
- That parents/carers to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community and in particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils or on any social media internet sites. If it is felt that slander has occurred, the school will refer the matter to the police. The school and the governing body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of such aggression, the school may ban the individual from entering the school site with immediate effect.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – STAGES

The vast majority of concerns from parents/carers are handled under the following general procedures:

Stage 1: Informal Stage – raising the concern/complaint

It is a sensible principle that problems are resolved wherever possible at the lowest level. The first point of contact should be your child's class teacher who will be able to explain the procedure that school follows. We hope to resolve your problem at this stage.

Stage 2: Formal Stage – formal consideration of your complaint

- If your complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, we will ask you to put full details of the issue in writing to the headteacher. If your complaint is regarding the co headteachers, please address your letter to the 'Chair of Governors'. We will acknowledge your letter within 3 working days and we will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement. If you would like to email your complaint, please send your correspondence to admin@townfield.doncaster.sch.uk marked Private & Confidential, for the attention of Jeremy Johnson, Chair of Governors.
- To help resolve the issue, we may invite you into school to a meeting to discuss your complaint in full. You may wish to bring another person with you and in addition, the co headteachers and/or chair of governors may ask another suitable person to attend the meeting.
- Following the meeting, we may need to investigate the matter further. This may involve speaking with other members of staff, pupils and any witnesses.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures as required by law.
- The headteacher or chair of governors will keep notes of all meetings, telephone calls and other related documentation.
- Once we have established all the relevant facts we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give an explanation of the co headteachers' or chair of governor's decision and the reasons for it. If follow up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
- The headteacher or chair of governors who is investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Consideration by a governors appeal panel

If the complaint has already been through Stage 1 & 2 and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to a governors appeal panel. This is a formal process and the ultimate recourse at school level.

- The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore consider it without prejudice.
- The aim of the panel is not to re-hear the complaint, it is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been fairly conducted. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The governing body will convene a panel of 3 governors and will aim to arrange for a panel meeting to take place within 20 working days.

- You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal
- The headteacher or complaint investigator will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary
- You will be informed that the panel is meeting on which date and time at least 5 working days in advance
- You will be entitled to bring someone along with you to the meeting – this would be best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school
- The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting will be accurately recorded. The records may show details of individual's names and therefore sharing this with you is at the panel's discretion due to the confidentiality aspect

During the meeting you will have an opportunity for the panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at Stage 3

- The complaint investigator will present their case in response
- You will be able to raise questions via the chair
- You will be questioned by the complaint investigator through the chair
- The panel members will be able to ask you and the complaint investigator questions
- You and the headteacher will be able to make a final statement
- The chair will then close the meeting explaining that the panel will now consider its' decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the headteacher within 3 school days

The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:

- Reach a unanimous or at least a majority decision on the case
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken if necessary
- Recommend where appropriate to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again

The clerk will send you and the co headteachers a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The Education Act 2011 states that with effect from 1 August 2012 where parents are unhappy once they have exhausted a school's complaints procedure, they can refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Education. There is no longer a role for Local Authorities to investigate parental complaints.

Closure of complaints

- very occasionally a school will feel that it needs to regretfully, close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied
- we will, where appropriate will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of 'agreeing to disagree'
- if a complainant persists in making representations to the school to the headteacher, chair of governors or anyone else or to the Local Authority, this can be extremely time consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care
- for this reason we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process. The Local Authority will support us in this position, and especially where the complainant's action is causing distress to staff and/or pupils
- In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage 3 of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint.
- The chair of governors may decide therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not help to move things forward.

Appendix 1:

Informing school about a concern or complaint

Child's name: _____ **Class:** _____

Nature of concern or complaint:

Parent name (print): _____ **Signature:** _____

Date: _____

Headteacher acknowledgement:

Date: _____ **Child:** _____

I confirm that I have received your concern / complaint and we will be in touch shortly.

H. G. Honeybone

Mrs H Honeybone

Headteacher

Appendix 2:

Compliments about school:

Should you wish to make a compliment about the school you can do this in a number of ways:

By email: admin@townfield.doncaster.sch.uk

By telephone: 01302 368192

In writing:

C/O School Business Manager
Town Field Primary School
Thorne Road
Doncaster
DN1 2JS