



Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Approved at Staffing, Policies & Communications: 2nd March 2016
Next Review Due: March 2018

Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School

Introduction

Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School aims to work with parents and members of the community in a positive and helpful way. There may, however, be a time when you have a worry or a concern about something that has happened in school. This policy sets out how we hope to work with parents and community members if that situation arises.

Aims of the Policy

The policy aims to identify a procedure which will enable concerns and complaints to be dealt with so that the concerned parties feel that the school has listened constructively to the nature of their concern or complaint and if necessary, taken action to rectify the situation.

What is a concern?

A concern is something that is happening in school that can cause a parent or member of the community to worry. Concerns can be raised informally with your child's class teacher, the head teacher, the SENCO, the school's complaints coordinator or a school governor. Concerns are always taken seriously by the school and the resolution of a concern by informal means is always encouraged wherever possible.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is a concern held by a parent or member of the community about an aspect of the school which requires an informal or occasionally a formal procedure to be invoked because initial attempts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful and the person raising a concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Informal Procedure for dealing with a concern or complaint.

(Appendix 2 Diagram A)

- If you are worried about something then please speak to your child's class teacher. Class teachers know the children very well and want to do their best for the children at Ashton Keynes School. They may suggest that an appointment is arranged for after school. This will give you more time to talk about your worry and also greater privacy. The morning time when the children are coming into school is always very busy and teachers are not able to give you the same amount of time as they are focussing on the arrival of the children.
- If you are unable to come into school because of work or home arrangements please write a note or give the school a ring. Class teachers are usually able to talk to parents and carers after school on the phone especially if you have rung the school office staff to let them know you would like to talk to one of the teachers. They can then arrange a time so the teacher will be available. Our teachers want to work with you to help overcome the difficulty.
- If your concern is about your child's progress in learning, the class teacher may suggest that a meeting is arranged between you, the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and them, so that there is a greater range of help given to help overcome the difficulty.

- If the class teacher receives a complaint or is aware of an on-going concern, then they are required to notify the Complaints Coordinator verbally and record this in their parent's consultation record. The Complaints Coordinator may ask to meet with the person raising the concern if necessary to address or resolve the concern. A letter will be sent to the person raising the concern, after a short period of time, to establish whether they feel that their concern has been addressed.
- If you still do not feel the concern has been addressed or the concern is about the class teacher then you are encouraged to make an appointment to see the Headteacher. The Headteacher may include the class teacher and/or the Complaints Coordinator at this meeting. The office staff will arrange a mutually convenient appointment time. Wherever possible the school hopes to find a solution to the difficulty. Sometimes this may not be possible as some difficulties are outside the remit of the school.
- If the Headteacher is not available the office staff will offer to arrange an appointment with the Complaints Coordinator.
- If the Headteacher considers it appropriate, advice can be sought from the Local Authority and the Chair of Governors informed.
- It may be necessary for the Head to inform all staff.
- If the concern is still not resolved then the Headteacher will inform you of the other procedures to make a formal complaint.
- If you take your concern to a governor. That governor will encourage you to raise the matter with the class teacher if appropriate or in the case of a whole school issue, with the Headteacher unless the concern is about the Headteacher.
(Appendix 2 Diagram B).
- Anonymous complaints cannot be dealt with so parents or members of the community are encouraged to come forwards by name in order to resolve a concern or complaint.
- The Complaints Coordinator is responsible for keeping a confidential record of informal concerns and complaints in the complaints log so that the school is able to respond positively to them and where necessary, amend procedures.
- If your concern is about a member of staff you should first raise this with the Headteacher either in person or in writing and a meeting can be arranged to discuss the issue.
- If your concern is about the Headteacher you should raise your concern in writing with the chair of governors.

**ASHTON KEYNES C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL REMAINS COMMITTED TO
ENSURE THAT MOST
CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS WILL BE RESOLVED WITH IN THIS WAY.**

Safeguarding Statement

Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School shares a purpose with parents to educate, keep children safe from harm and have their welfare promoted.

We are committed to working with parents positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all parents are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information until we have permission or it is necessary to do so to protect a child.

Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School will share with parents any concerns we may have about their child unless to do so may place a child at risk of harm.

We encourage parents to disclose any concerns they may have with Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School. We make parents aware of our Child Protection Policy and parents are aware that these are on the school website.

Formal Complaints

(Appendix 2 Diagram C)

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively we deal with formal complaints in three stages.

Stage 1

- If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of the informal meeting, or feel that the issue is serious enough to warrant it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. A form for doing this is included in Appendix 1.
- The Headteacher should acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5* working days. They will outline their decision if there is one to be made, and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.
- The Headteacher may call you in for a meeting to discuss the issue outcome, possible solutions, or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint.
- The Headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Headteacher will talk to that employee.
- If it is an allegation of abuse, a formal investigation may be instigated by the school or external child welfare authorities to whom the school reports. See Appendix 2 of the Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School Child Protection Policy September 2015.
- Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the chair of governors who can be contacted via the school office.

*There may be occasions e.g. where school holidays intervene when it may not be possible to achieve these timescales

Stage 2

- If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may lodge your complaint with the chair of governors in writing, explaining your concern and the steps that have led up to you taking this course of action.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the chair of governors within 5* working days of the complaint being lodged with them.
- The chair of governors will respond to you in writing within 15* working days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.
- In some circumstances the chair of governors may ask another governor or a suitable person from outside the school to investigate the complaint, make any recommendations and report back to the chair.

Stage 3

Complaints Heard by the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

In the unlikely situation that your complaint is still not resolved or involves the Head Teacher personally, you should address your complaint, in writing, to the chair of governors. The chair of governors will then convene a formal hearing by the Governors' Complaints Panel. This Complaints Panel will consist of a number of Governors sufficient to hear and act on your complaint. The task of the chair of governors is to ensure that correct procedures are complied with; The chair will not attend the Panel, but will nominate who is to chair it. If a Governors' Complaints Panel is to hear your complaint, you will receive a letter in advance of the hearing, setting out the detailed procedures that will be followed during and after the hearing including an indication of timescales.

No member of the governing body can sit on the complaints panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time. In some circumstances this may mean using governors from other schools or another suitable person (e.g. ex school advisor, ex Headteacher).

The complaints panel decision is final, if you are unhappy with the outcome you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State.

The remit for the complaints panel can be found in Appendix 3.

*There may be occasions e.g. where school holidays intervene when it may not be possible to achieve these timescales

The Complaints Procedure and what you can expect from it.

Receiving the complaint - *The person receiving the complaint will:*

- Listen sympathetically to the complaint and with an open mind.
- Offer an immediate acknowledgement verbally and within three working days in writing.
- Indicate what action will be taken, by whom and by when.
- Decide in consultation with others if necessary, to whom the complaint should be referred.
- Ensure all relevant information is passed on to the person investigating immediately.
- Inform the complainant of who will be investigating the complaint.

Dealing with the complaint – *The Person investigating the complaint will:*

- Ensure that a fair and thorough investigation is carried out.
- 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 if further information is necessary.
- Clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the matter.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep a record of interviews.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the person investigating the complaint will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. The investigator may acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or part. In addition the person investigating may decide it is 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 causing complaint will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An understanding to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged at each stage of the procedure, both informal and formal, to state what actions they feel might resolve the complaint. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

The investigating person will identify areas of agreement between all parties; clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred and try to establish a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when, despite all the stages of the complaints procedure being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body will inform the complainant that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Time-Limits

All concerns and complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Realistic time limits will be set for each action within each stage of the procedure. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

Policy Issued.....Mar
2016

To be reviewed.....Mar
2018

Appendix 1

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Complaints Coordinator who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:
Pupils Name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address:
Postcode:
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?)

Complaint Form Cont:

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signature:

Date:

Office Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2

Diagram A

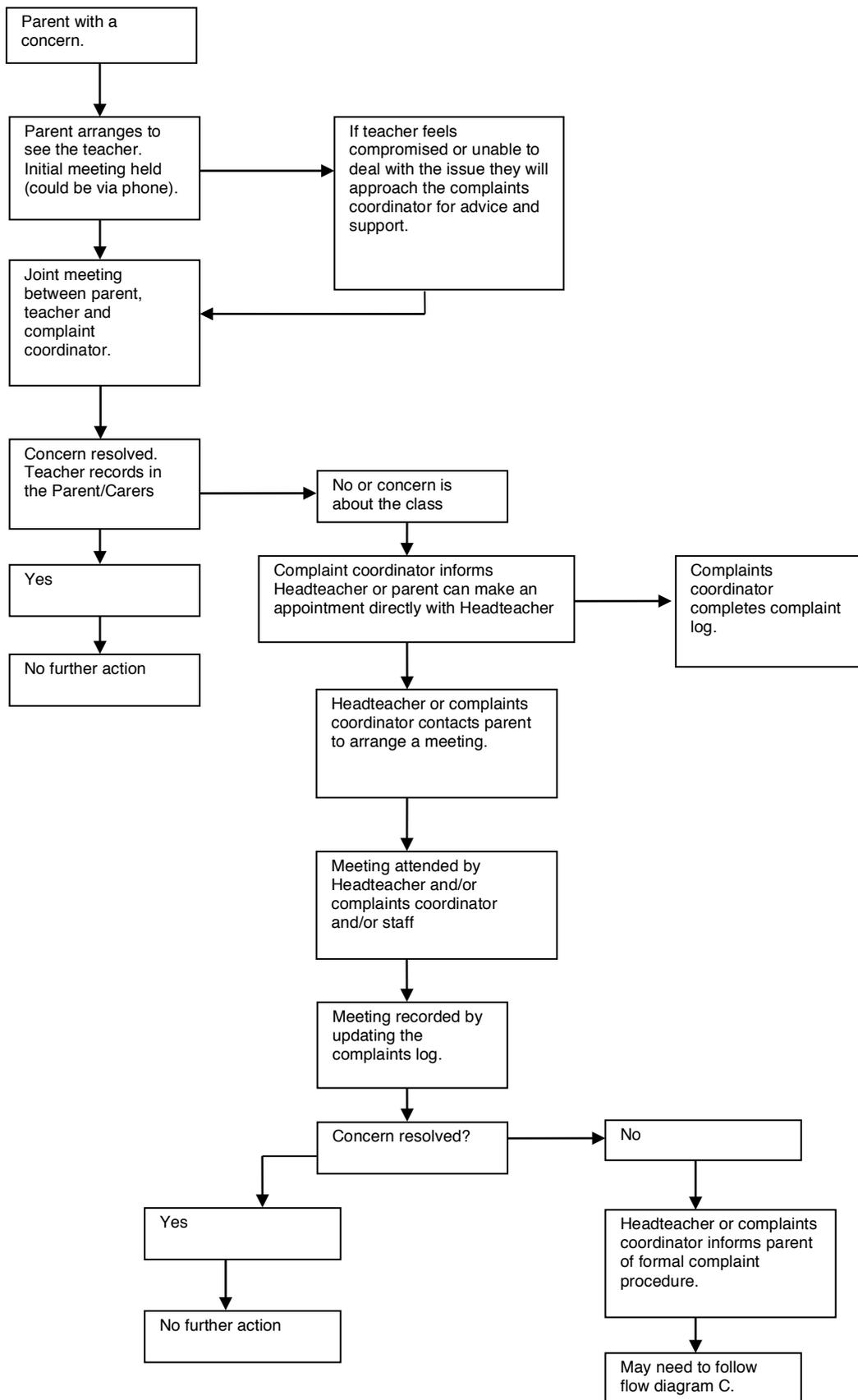


Diagram B

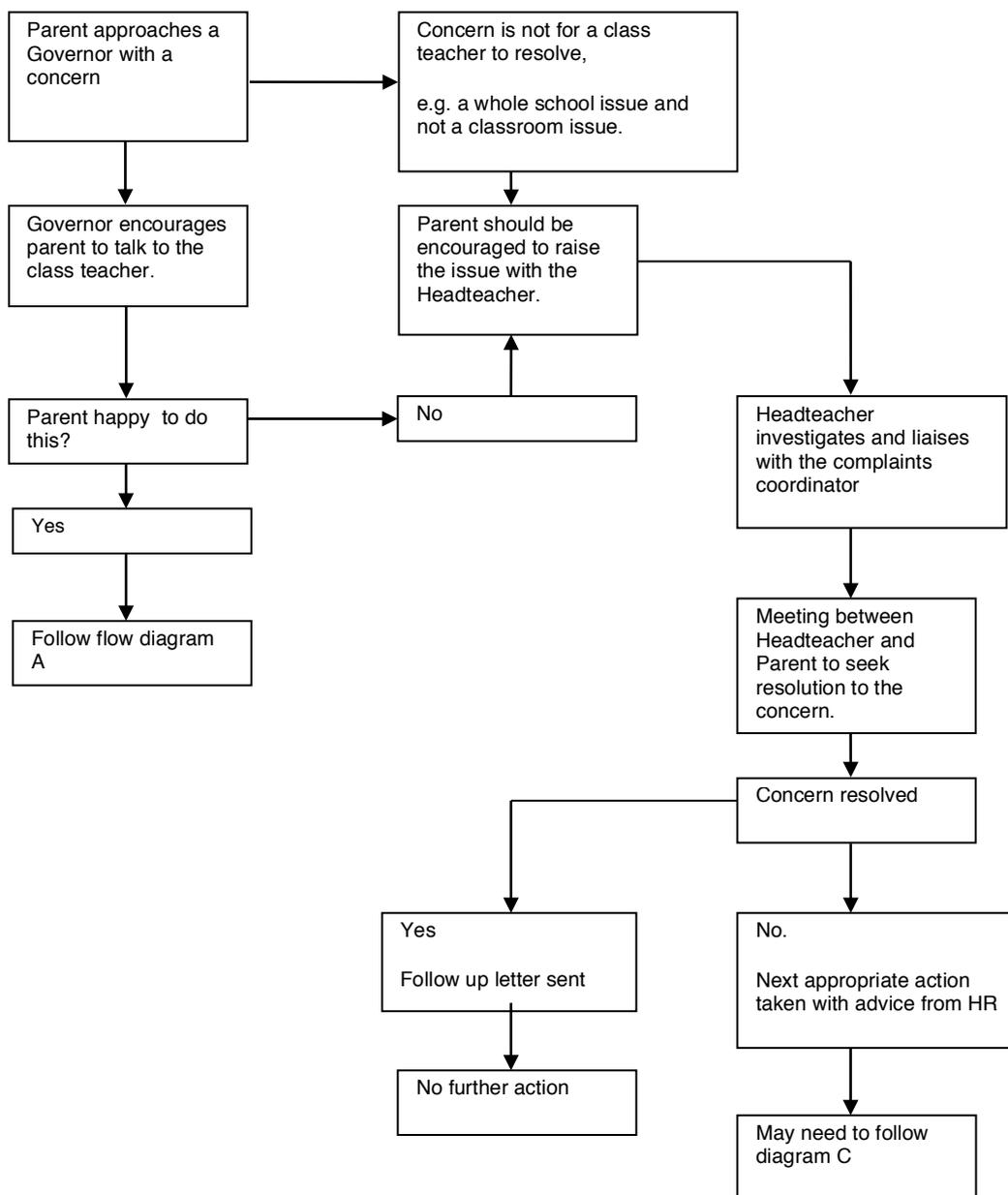
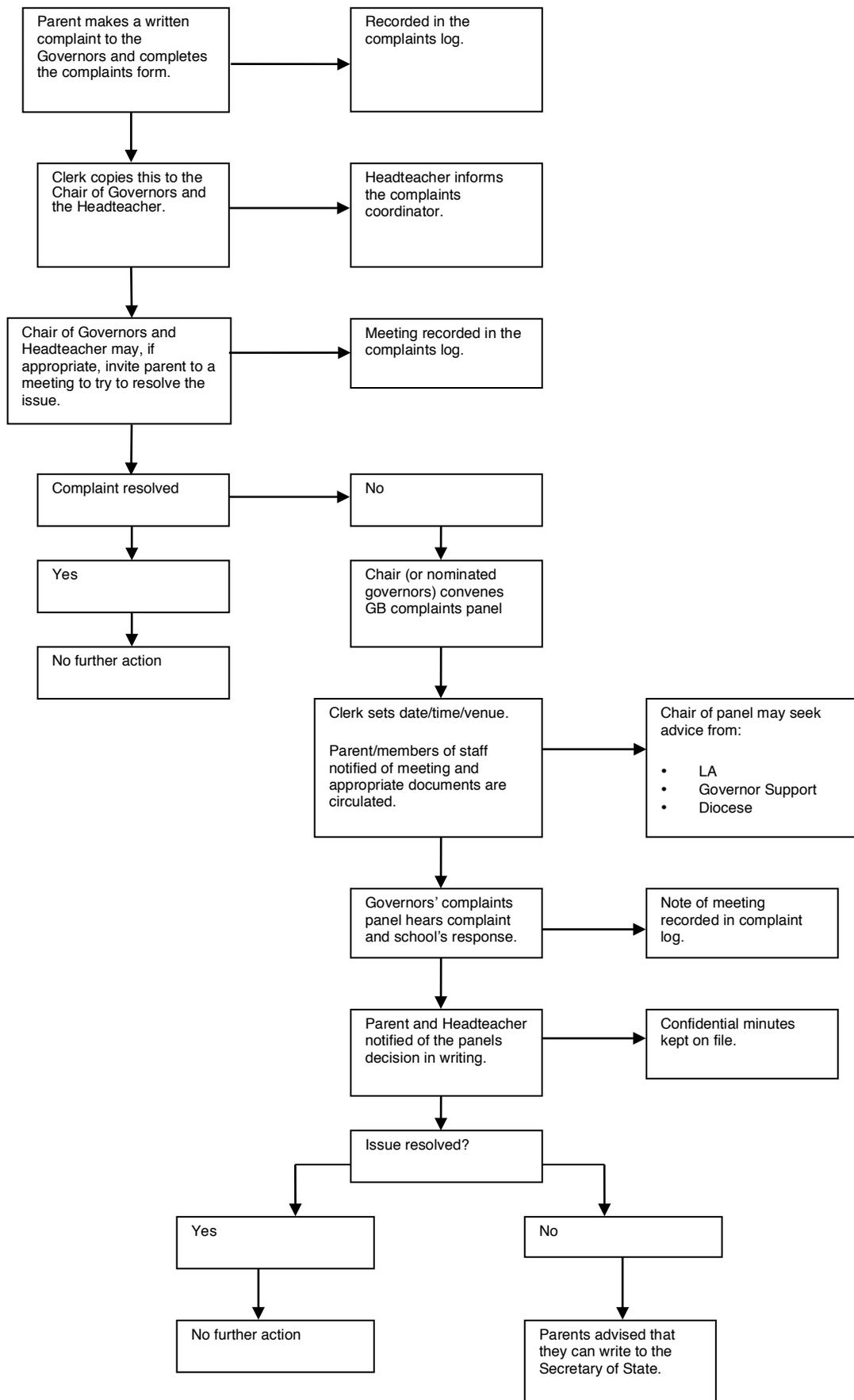


Diagram C



Appendix 3

The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the 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.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

d. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

e. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

The Department strongly recommends that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel;