Canonbury Primary School

Concerns and Complaints Procedure

Policy based upon the model procedures provided by Cambridge Education @ Islington

Agreed by the Governing Body
July 2011

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1. DEALING WITH CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS ISSUES AT CANONBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Preamble

The governing body of Canonbury Primary School is responsible for ensuring the proper and just consideration of complaints.

It is important that concerns and complaints are handled speedily, efficiently and as amicably as possible. In this way, the school is able to maintain a fair and responsible approach to all complaints they receive. Canonbury monitors all complaints it receives in order to carry out a self-review of its procedures and make any necessary adjustment. The governing body reviews the Concerns and Complaints Procedure annually. Canonbury is required to provide termly statistics on complaints to CE@Islington so that overall monitoring can be carried out to advise all schools and the local authority on improvements to practice. CE@Islington may also require details of any complaint and its consideration in order to answer formal enquiries from the Department for Education or others. The school will be consulted before any response to such enquiries is made.

Advice to Headteachers and governors on the handling of complaints is available from CE@Islington School Business Services section.

It is expected that, in the first instance, concerns will usually be raised informally following the process outlined in Appendix B of this policy. Subsequent to that, Canonbury's official complaints procedure sets out three stages for dealing with complaints within the school. These are:

- the informal stage within the school;
- the formal complaint (Stage 1) - heard by the Complaints Committee of the governing body or a nominated Lead Governor for complaints;
- the formal complaint (Stage 2) - heard by an Appeals Committee of the governing body

2. THE INFORMAL STAGE

2.1 The complainant should contact the Headteacher to discuss the problem or complaint, or complete a Complaint Form.

2.2 Following the discussion/meeting with the Headteacher, or receipt of a complaint form, the complainant will be informed in writing by the Headteacher of:

- any action taken or proposed to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- the complainant's right to submit a formal written complaint to the Governing Body through the clerk if the complainant is still dissatisfied.

2.3 The Headteacher will record the action taken and, in the event of a formal complaint being submitted, will ensure that it is forwarded to the Governing Body.

2.4 Complainants who contact CE@Islington directly will be advised of the school's complaints procedure and advised to discuss the matter with the Headteacher first. Unless the complainant wishes otherwise, CE@Islington will inform the Headteacher of the concern raised and ask the Headteacher to contact the complainant to seek a resolution through the school's complaints procedure.

2.5 If it is clear that if the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complainant will be provided with a copy of the school's complaints procedure and advised to contact the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted through the office and details are on the website'. Unless the complainant wishes otherwise, CE@Islington will inform the Chair and the Headteacher of the concern raised and ask the Chair to seek a resolution through the school's complaints procedure. The Chair of Governors may be able to resolve the complaint at the informal stage.

3. THE FORMAL STAGE - STAGE 1 - Complaint to the Governing Body

3.1 The Governing Body will establish a Committee of Governors to hear any formal complaints made, or nominate a Lead Governor to deal with formal complaints.

3.2 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Headteacher's response or if the complaint is about the actions of the headteacher, s/he can request that the complaint is referred to the Governing Body's Complaints Committee.

3.3 The Headteacher will inform the complainant of the need to submit a formal written complaint to the clerk to the Governing Body and will supply the name and address of the clerk to the Governing body for this purpose.

3.4 In the case of a formal complaint against the Headteacher, the clerk to the Governors may seek further to resolve the matter him/herself informally but this shall not delay the arrangements for the formal consideration of the complaint. In all cases the Clerk to the Governing Body will immediately upon receipt of the complaint send an acknowledgement and confirmation that a formal hearing will be convened within twenty school days. The Clerk to Governors will then immediately forward the complaint to the Chair of the Complaints Committee/Lead Governor to convene the hearing. The Chair or Lead Governor may ask the Headteacher to conduct further investigations of the facts for presentation at the hearing. In the event that the complaint is about the actions of the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors may, if unable to resolve the matter informally, seek to engage an independent person to act as an investigating officer to establish the facts. The School Support & Governor Services Section at CE@Islington may be able to offer assistance in engaging either a CE@Islington officer or other suitable person for this purpose as an ad hoc additional Service Agreement service.

3.5 A complaints hearing by the Complaints Committee/Lead Governor will be convened within 20 school days of the receipt of the formal complaint.

6. The Clerk to the Complaints Committee will send a letter to the complainant stating the date, time and place of the hearing at least 10 working days before the hearing. The letter should enclose a copy of the complaints procedure. If the complainant wishes to submit a written statement or refer to any additional documents in his/her possession, copies should be sent to the Clerk/Chair of the Complaints Committee/Lead Governor seven working

days before the date of the meeting in order that sufficient copies can be made available to the Complaints Committee/Lead Governor. Similarly if any investigation report is prepared by the Headteacher or other person at the request of the Chair of Governors, it should be available seven working days before the hearing for circulation. Any papers to be considered at the hearing should be made available both to the Committee and to the complainant and the Headteacher at least 3 days before the hearing. The names of any witnesses to be called by the complainant or Headteacher should be notified to the clerk/Chair of the Complaints Committee/Lead Governor, seven working days before the hearing and should be notified to the Committee, the complainant and the Headteacher at least 3 days before the hearing.

4. THE HEARING

4.1 The aim of the hearing is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant. Governors should seek to remedy matters wherever possible.

4.2 Introduction of previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses should be a reason to adjourn the hearing so that the other side has the time to consider the situation.

3. The hearing should consider the complaint as informally as possible, however, the meeting should be structured to ensure that it is effective.

3. The complainant will be informed of the committee's decision where possible within 3 school days of the meeting.

5. THE FORMAL STAGE - STAGE 2: Complaint to the Governing Body's Appeals Committee

5.1 This stage applies if following the hearing under Stage 1 of the procedure and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, and wishes to appeal against the decision.

5.2 Any appeal against a decision under Stage 1 of this procedure must be lodged with the Clerk to the Governing Body within 20 working days of the issue of the notification of the decision in writing. The Clerk to the Committee will acknowledge it and refer it to the Chair of the Appeals Committee

5.3 The Governing Body will establish an Appeals Committee of Governors to hear any appeals made against the decision of the Complaints Committee.

The appeals committee shall comprise at least as many governors as involved in the Stage 1 hearing of the complaint

5.4 The appellant must state very clearly the grounds on which the appeal is being made and specify whether the appeal is against

- the decision of the Governors' Complaints Panel

and/or - the conduct of the hearing.

5.5 The Chair of the Appeals Committee will arrange for a special meeting of the Appeals Committee to be convened within 20 working days of the receipt of the formal appeal.

5.6 The Clerk/Chair of the Appeals Committee will send a letter to the complainant stating the date, time and place of the appeal hearing at least 10 working days before the meeting. Any documents relevant to the appeal will be enclosed with the letter. If the complainant wishes to refer to any additional documents in their possession then copies should be sent to the Clerk/Chair of the Appeals Committee seven working days before the date of the meeting in order that sufficient copies can be made available to the Appeals Committee.

6. THE APPEAL HEARING

6.2 As in the case with Stage 1 of the procedure, the aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant. Governors should seek to remedy matters wherever possible.

6.2 Governors may wish to enlist the services of an independent person to sit on the Appeal Committee. Any expense paid to an independent volunteer serving on an appeals Committee would be the responsibility of the school.

6.3 The meeting should again consider the appeal as informally as possible. Governors may wish to follow the same procedure for the conduct of the appeals meeting, as set out in attached Appendix A.

6.4 The Appeals Committee will consider the complaint and the case made by the complainant and;

- reach a decision on the complaint appeal and their reasons for it;

- decide upon any action to be taken or recommended including details of any request made to those complained against to take particular action to resolve the complaint.

6.5 The hearing will be minuted and notification of the outcome of the meeting will be sent to all parties within, where possible, 3 working days of the hearing

6.6 The Appeal Committee's decision will be final on behalf of the school and the Governing Body, and will be notified to the complainant in writing, and to the members of the Complaints Committee.

7. CE@ISLINGTON'S ROLE

7.1 CE@Islington role in the process is that of a monitoring one, clearly separated from the investigation and decision making ones which are, by law, for the governing body to undertake.

7.2 CE@Islington will need to ensure it has access to all complaints investigation and hearings papers so that, in the event of a further appeal to the Secretary of State, that CE@Islington is able to respond to requests for information as required.

7.3 CE@Islington will arrange:

a. training for headteachers and governing bodies on the procedures, and dealing with complainants informally and formally with a view to resolution of concerns at the earliest stage;

b. when necessary, produce improved publicity material available to potential complainants, which would clearly define the procedures, roles and responsibilities of the various agents in complaints; and

c. to hold copies of individual school's complaints' procedures which may be sent to complainants who have difficulty obtaining them from the school.

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCT OF THE HEARING

Set out below is a procedure that Complaints Committees can follow for the conduct of the hearing:

(i) The complainant shall explain the nature of her/his complaint and may submit a written statement, to the hearing.

(ii) The Headteacher and the Committee/Lead Governor may question the complainant about the complaint and why it has been made.

(iii) If any investigation report has been produced at the request of the Chair of Governors by the Headteacher (or another person) it will be considered. If the report is produced by a person other than the Headteacher, the person may be present at the hearing and answer questions of clarification for the complainant, the Headteacher and Committee/Lead Governor. Otherwise the Headteacher will respond to the complaint.

(iv) The complainant and the Committee/Lead Governor may question the Headteacher about her/his response to the complaint.

(v) The Committee/Lead Governor, the Headteacher and the complainant shall have the right to call witnesses where there are disputes as to the fact.

(vi) The Committee/Lead Governor, the Headteacher and the complainant shall have the right to question any such witnesses.

(vii) The complainant may make a final statement.

(viii) The Headteacher may make a final statement.

(ix) The Chair of the Committee/Lead Governor shall explain that the complaint will now be considered and a decision reached which will be notified to the complainant and the Headteacher in writing.

(x) The complainant and the Headteacher will then leave the meeting.

(xi) The complaints Committee/Lead Governor will consider the complaint and the cases made by the complainant and Headteacher and:

- reach a decision on the complaint and the reasons for it;
- decide upon any action to be taken or recommended including details of any request or direction to those complained against to take particular action to resolve the complaint.

(xii) Notification of the decision will be sent to the complainant and to the headteacher in writing and setting out the right of appeal against the decision.

(xiii) The letter sent to the complainant informing her/him of the decision concludes this stage of the procedure.

APPENDIX B

INFORMAL PROCEDURE FOR RAISING A CONCERN AT CANONBURY

Stage 1
If parents/carers have a concern they should start by speaking with their child's class teacher or teaching assistant. All teachers are on the playground with pupils before and after school each day. While this isn't a great place to have a private discussion, it gives parents an opportunity to raise any concerns briefly and to arrange a meeting if necessary. Teachers can also be contacted by email (Name.surname@canonbury.islington.sch.uk so, for example Katie Hanley's email is Katie.Hanley@canonbury.islington.sch.uk) or by phone via the office (020 7226 5020). Usually, this interaction between class teacher and parent/carer resolves any concerns.

Stage 2
If this approach is not appropriate, if the concern is about the staff member, or if the meeting fails to resolve the concern, the parent/carer should arrange to meet with the child's senior teacher. If parents/carers are unsure about which staff member is the child senior's teacher, they should ask at the school office or consult the staff structure page of the information section of the school's web site at www.canonburyprimaryschool.co.uk. If a concern relates to bullying or social exclusion, it may also be helpful to ask if the school's community cohesion leader can be present.

Stage 3
If this fails to resolve the issue then it should be raised with the Headteacher, or in his absence, one of the Deputy Headteachers.

Parents/carers can make an appointment via the school office. When the request for an appointment is made, the office will ask for some background information to allow the Headteacher to prepare for the meeting to ensure a successful outcome wherever possible. Parents/carers can choose to give the information verbally or on a confidential form in a sealed envelope which the office will provide.

The meeting with the Headteacher aims to identify how the concern can be resolved and the steps which need to be taken. These will be clearly outlined at the end of the meeting and further follow up meetings may be arranged as a result.

Throughout the above stages, class teachers, senior teachers, the Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher will keep a brief written record of any conversations or meetings with parents/carers relating to specific concerns so that these can be referred to if necessary.

Stage 4 – Official Complaints procedure - Informal Stage
If at the end of this process, the parent/carer feels that the concern has still not been satisfactorily resolved, they should consult the school's official Complaints Procedure (available on the school website or from the office) and follow the steps outlined in the Informal Stage.

APPENDIX C
SCHOOL COMPLAINTS FORM

AFFIX DATE STAMP

DATE RECEIVED

SCHOOL_____

A. Personal Details

TITLE:_____FULL NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____

_____ POSTCODE:_____

TEL DAY_____EVENING:_____

MOBILE:_____EMAIL:_____

FAX:_____OTHER:_____

B.

Alternative Contact

If you don't have a daytime contact number, but can be contacted through a friend or relative, or through someone at an advice centre, please give their name and telephone number:

NAME:_____TEL:_____

Details of Complaint. *Please fill in Sections C, D, E & F*

C Does the complaint concern your child? YES π NO π If no move to Section D

What is your child's name_____

Date of Birth_____ Date(s) of incident _____

D Does the complaint concern the a) Headteacher π b) Teacher π c) Other member of staff π d) Other pupil π e) School Premises π f) Other π

If your answer is c) please specify:_____

E Was the matter raised with the Head? YES π NO π If yes, Date:_____

Was the matter raised with the LEA? YES π NO π If yes, Date:_____

F Please give a brief outline of complaint or concern, including any action taken by the Headteacher or LEA

APPENDIX C
SCHOOL COMPLAINTS FORM

Signature_____Date:_____