



## **HARTSBOURNE PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**To be read in conjunction with all Home-School Policies, Behaviour Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Pupil Diversity Policy, SEND Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy.**

### **RATIONALE**

Hartsbourne Primary School works in partnership with parents, governors and the local authority and we seek to improve our school by paying close attention to concerns. We believe that nearly all concerns can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with the class teacher, Inclusion Leader or Headteacher before they escalate into a formal complaint.

For formal complaints the Governors have adopted the 'School Based Complaints Procedure' as recommended by Hertfordshire County Council (September 2012). This policy sets out the schools aims and general procedure for customer care and complaints. It does not cover:

- Child Protection Procedures
- Appeals about admissions
- Appeals to governors discipline committee against permanent exclusion from school
- Staff Disciplinary Procedures

Hartsbourne's Complaints Procedures are separate from any Disciplinary or Capability Procedures. If the investigation of any complaint were to lead to concerns on the part of the Headteacher or Governors about the capability or conduct of a member of staff, these would not be discussed or dealt with within the procedures outlined in this document.

### **PRINCIPLES AND AIMS**

At Hartsbourne we aim to:

- settle differences informally where possible;
- deal with all complaints honestly, fairly and politely;
- look into all complaints thoroughly and fairly and commensurate with the gravity of the complaint;
- keep a complaint confidential and only share it with people who might contribute to the resolution;
- clearly communicate the complaints processes to parents, staff and governors;
- tell the complainant at each stage what the result is and what is to happen next;
- enable parents to be accompanied at any formal meeting by a friend or representative who may speak on their behalf;
- deal with complaints as quickly as practicable (complaints made under the formal procedure may take up to 28 working days to complete);
- keep a record of all findings and actions;
- give an apology if a mistake has been made;
- ensure the Governing Body properly investigates the complaint in the school before the complainant can escalate the complaint to the Local Education Authority or the Secretary of State.

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

### Step 1

- If a parent has a general complaint about anything to do with the school (such as parking, arrangements for clubs, performances, assemblies), they should contact the school using the [parents@hartsbourne.herts.sch.uk](mailto:parents@hartsbourne.herts.sch.uk) email explaining the issue.
- If a parent has a complaint about something that happened in class, pupil behaviour towards one another or academic progress then parents should speak to their child's class teacher.
- If the complaint relates to special educational needs, then the parent should consult the school's Inclusion Leader (Mrs Durrant-Patel) as well as the class teacher.

Appointments to meet with class teachers and the Inclusion Leader should be made through the school office.

### Step 2

- If the complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily by the school office, class teacher or Inclusion Leader, then a parent should make an appointment to speak with the Headteacher. A brief outline of the reason for the appointment may be requested by the school office when the appointment is made.

### Step 3

If a parent is not satisfied with the outcomes of discussions as described in Steps 1 and 2, they can make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. This should be stated in writing by filling in a formal complaints form and sending it to the Chair of Governors. A copy of the form can be found at the end of this policy or obtained from the school website or school office. This allows the parent to state:

- what the complaint is about;
- who has been spoken to already;
- what actions they would like to see to resolve the complaint.

## GOVERNING BODY

Parents who approach governors individually will be directed to the class teacher, Headteacher and this Policy.

No individual governor deals with a complaint. The governor designated as Complaints Co-ordinator is Mr Stewart Shaw and he will ensure the relevant members of the Governing Body are aware of the complaint and will liaise directly with the complainant. The complaint is then referred to the relevant committee or back to the Headteacher if all the complaint procedures have not been exhausted at that level.

Once a formal complaint is made to Governors:

- the complaint is not reported to the whole Governing Body until it is resolved, and then not in detail;
- information shared with the Governing Body will not name individuals;
- all parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing;
- the decision is given in writing to the complainant;
- the complainant is made aware of any right of appeal.

See Appendix 1 for further details of this process.

## **TIME LIMITS**

Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event to which they relate. The school will investigate complaints that are made within six months of the event or made within six months of the complainant realising that they have cause for complaint as long as that is no more than 12 months after the event itself.

If the complainant was not aware that there was cause for complaint, then the complaint must be made within six months of the date from which they become aware, or 12 months from the date of the event whichever is earlier.

The School has discretion to extend these time limits where it would have been unreasonable for the complaint to be made earlier and where it is still possible to investigate the facts. If this discretion is rejected, the complainant may appeal to the Governing Body.

## **VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

There may be a rare occasion when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. A vexatious complaint is likely to involve some or all of the following:

- The complaint arises from a historic and irreversible decision or incident.
- Contact with the school is frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful for staff.
- The complainant behaves in an aggressive manner to staff when he/she presents his/her complaint or is verbally abusive or threatening.
- The complainant changes aspects of the complaint partway through the complaint process.
- The complainant makes and breaks contact with the school on an ongoing basis.
- The complainant persistently approaches the school (and in some cases the Local Authority) through different routes about the same issue in the hope of getting different responses.

If the situation is challenging but it is possible to proceed, staff will avoid giving unrealistic expectations on the outcome of the complaint. In instances where there is a complete breakdown of relations between the complainant and the school, a decision may be made to restrict contact. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options that Hartsbourne is most likely to consider are:

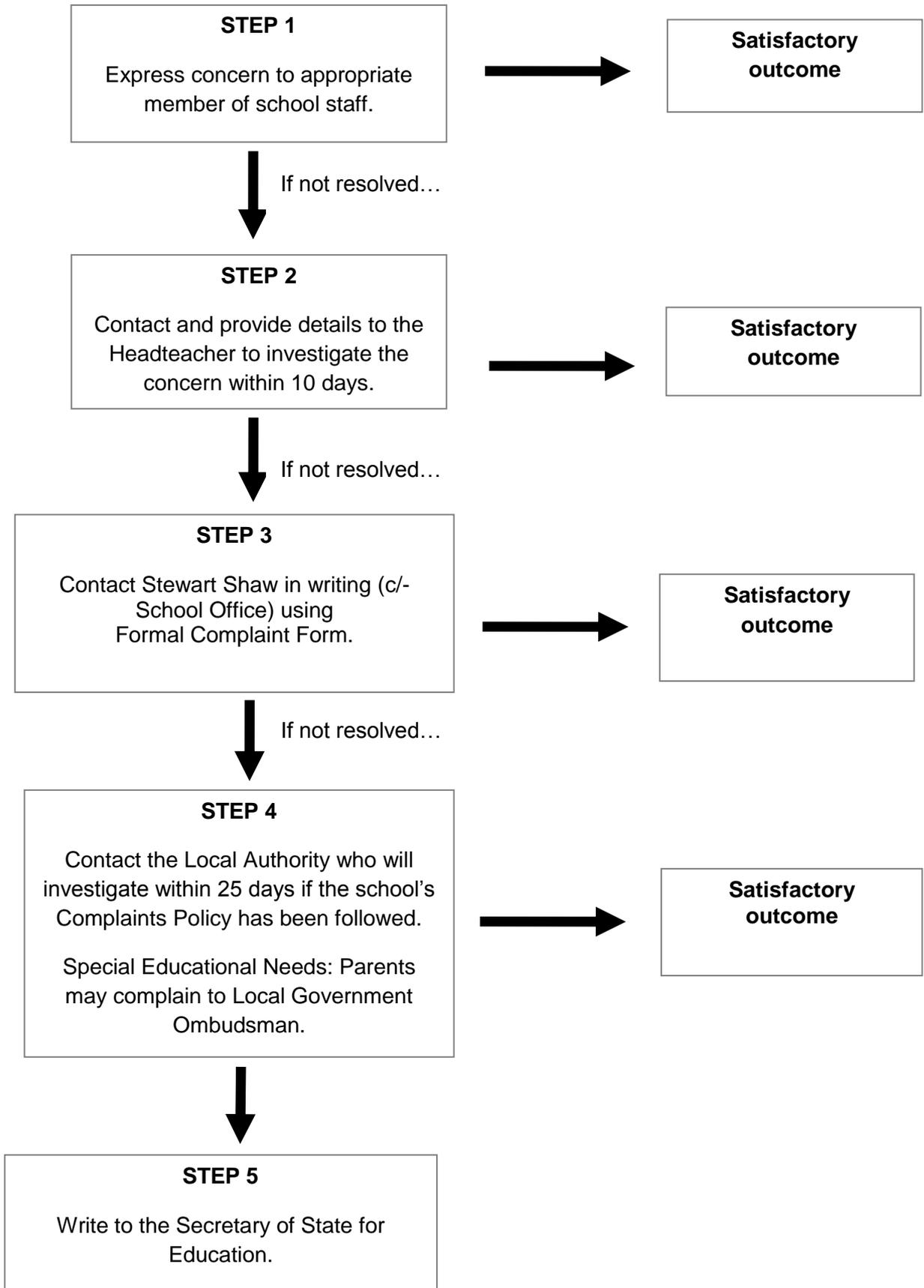
- Requesting contact in a particular form (e.g. letters only).
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff (e.g. Headteacher).
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about his/her future contact with the school.
- Informing the complainant that if he/she still does not follow advice (as stated above), any further correspondence that does not present significant new matters or new information will not necessarily be acknowledged but will be kept on file.
- If the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been examined through the complaints procedure, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Date of Policy: September 2014

Date of Review: September 2016



STEPS TOWARDS RESOLVING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS





**HARTSBOURNE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Formal Complaint Form**

<b>Full name</b>		
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Postcode</b>		
<b>Email address</b>		
<b>Telephone no.</b>	<b>Day</b>	
	<b>Evening</b>	
	<b>Mobile</b>	
<b>What is it you would like to complain about?</b>		
<b>Have you complained to the Headteacher?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>When did you do this?</b>	<b>Date:</b>	
<b>What happened when you complained to the Headteacher?</b>		

<b>What would you like the school to do to resolve your complaint?</b>

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Please return this form to Mrs T Candler, Chair of Governors, c/- the school in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential'.**