



## Complaints Policy

Thorpe Acre Infant School (TAIS) is committed to working in close partnership with all members of the school community. The school places great value on the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning. Staff and governors actively encourage a positive relationship between the school and the families of children who attend the school. We also desire to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community.

### Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at TAIS knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Where any concerns are raised, we aim to resolve these as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Usually concerns that are raised can be resolved very quickly through the school's day to day communication between parents and the school staff. However, for those situations where this is not the case, we have a more formal process to investigate and deal with complaints. Our complaints procedure is detailed on the following pages.

### Who can raise a complaint?

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has an interest in the school. *This policy does not cover complaints from staff who should follow the relevant internal policy.*

### Timescales from submitting a complaint

To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible, usually within 3 months. This time limit does not apply if it can be shown that there were good reasons for not making the complaint earlier and it is still possible to investigate the complaint properly.

### Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### Review

This policy will be reviewed:	<i>annually</i>
Adopted on:	January '17
Last reviewed:	16 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2016

## **TAIS Complaints Procedure**

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To this end all staff and governors are aware of the procedure to be followed if a complaint is raised. Also, whilst not wishing to encourage complaints, complainants should note that they have a duty to raise a matter as soon as conveniently possible.

The school operates a 4 stage complaints procedure outlined below. If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should refer your formal written complaint to the chair of governors to be dealt with under Stage 3 of this procedure.

Where the following procedure refers to the headteacher, they may delegate any of these functions to a member of the senior leadership team if appropriate. In exceptional circumstances, the headteacher may commission an independent investigator to undertake an investigation on behalf of the school.

### **Stage 1: Informal concern**

An initial concern should be raised with the class teacher or the member of staff concerned. This can be done in writing, by telephone or in person by appointment. The vast majority of concerns can be dealt with at this stage. It would be helpful to identify at this point what outcome you are looking for in order for us to address your concern quickly and effectively.

*If you are not a parent/carer of a child at our school, please start at Stage 2 and make contact with the headteacher to discuss your concerns.*

### **Stage 2: Formal complaint to the headteacher**

If your concern is not resolved at the informal stage you can make a formal complaint to the headteacher, within 10 school days of Stage 1 being concluded. Your complaint should usually be made in writing indicating your desired outcome from the complaint (a form is enclosed for this purpose).

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school days and will include an indicative date for a written response. The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring that your complaint is investigated appropriately. They may meet with you to clarify details of your complaint and the resolution that is being sought. The headteacher will investigate the complaint further and make every effort to resolve the issue.

*Dependent upon the nature of the issues raised, the matter will either continue to be dealt with through the school complaints procedure, or by other procedures such as the disciplinary or safeguarding procedures. If this happens you will be informed of this fact but you will not be advised of the outcome of these proceedings.*

On conclusion of the investigation the headteacher will write to you with all appropriate information in relation to the complaint and information on any outcome(s). The response should also inform you of the next stage of the procedure in case you are not satisfied with the response.

### **Stage 3: Formal complaint to the chair of governors**

If you are dissatisfied with the headteacher's response or your complaint concerns the conduct of the headteacher then you can make a formal complaint to the chair of governors.

Your complaint should be made in writing to the chair of governors, care of the school, within 10 school days of the date of the headteacher's response to you. Please provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the headteacher's letter concluding Stage 2 and give details in writing of why they are not satisfied with the outcome.

At this stage the chair of governors will generally handle the complaint but can delegate this to a nominated governor. In exceptional circumstances, the chair of governors may commission an independent investigator to undertake an investigation on behalf of the school.

You will receive an acknowledgment of receipt of your complaint within 5 school days and an indicative timescale for response.

The governor will investigate the complaint and make every effort to resolve the issue. They may meet with you if they need clarification or further information is necessary.

On conclusion of the investigation you will receive a written response of the outcome reached and the process for appeal.

### **Stage 4: Formal complaint complaints appeal panel**

If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you may request that it is reviewed by the complaints appeal panel by writing to the clerk to the governing body within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of Stage 3.

The clerk will write to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days. The letter will explain the process which is to be followed and information about the how the panel will operate.

The clerk will convene a governing body complaints appeal panel and ask you to provide details of your appeal and any relevant supporting evidence.

The panel will usually consist of 3 governors from the school. These governors will have no previous knowledge of the complaint. If this is not possible for any reason, then alternative arrangements will be made and communicated to you.

The remit of the complaints appeal panel is to:

- 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.

You will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within 5 days. The letter will confirm the end of the school's and governing body's involvement with the complaint and explain any further rights of appeal.

## **Further rights of appeal**

If you have completed the school procedure and remain dissatisfied, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Secretary of State through the School Complaints Unit (SCU). The Secretary of State will usually not consider any complaints until the school's complaint procedure has been exhausted.

The SCU will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. They will look at whether the complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies were adhered to and comply with education legislation.

The SCU can be contacted on 0370 000 2288, or in writing to:

Department for Education School Complaints Unit  
2nd Floor  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

## **Complaints against an individual governor**

If your complaint concerns the chair of governors or an individual governor you should write to the clerk to the governing body. The clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days. The letter will explain the process that will be followed and the expected timescale for response.

The chair of governors will consider complaints about an individual governor and the vice chair will consider complaints against the chair. If for any reason this is not appropriate then another governor will be nominated.

On conclusion of the investigation, you will receive a written response detailing all appropriate information in relation to the complaint and information on any outcome(s). There will be no further right of appeal for complaints against an individual governor.

## **Timescales for response**

**Our aim is to address your complaint in a timely and efficient manner. However, there may be occasions when we are unable to achieve the timescale indicated. In this event, we will write to you outlining the reason for the delay and provide you with a new timescale for the conclusion of that part of the process.**



**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to, when 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.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Official Use:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**Acknowledgement sent by:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

