



# SpiresFederation

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

***Our Core Values are: Friendship, Respect and Honesty***

**Our Mission:**

The Spires Federation family of small schools is committed to excellence. We hope to inspire all of our pupils to enjoy learning, make outstanding progress and achieve their full potential.

**Our Aims:**

- We will provide our pupils with a solid foundation of essential knowledge and skills.
- We will develop our pupils' social, spiritual, moral and cultural values to help them fulfil their potential.
- We will provide the widest possible range of experiences for all of our pupils.
- We will nurture and develop the strong relationships between the schools and their wider communities.
- At Digby and Dunston, as Church of England schools, we believe that every pupil is unique in the sight of God. We aim to provide a Christian environment for every pupil, including opportunities to worship together and with our local communities.

In our schools all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers and believe that our schools and parents/carers must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help pupils gain the most from their time in school.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

- The First Step:

Please arrange to discuss any concerns with your child's class teacher, or with the particular teacher concerned. We hope that most problems can be sorted out this way.

- The Second Step:

If, after speaking to your child's teacher, you do not feel that your complaint has been properly dealt with, or if your concern is about the conduct of a particular teacher, then you should discuss the matter with the Headteacher. In almost all cases we can sort things out satisfactorily in this way.

- The Third Step:

You should make a formal written complaint to the Headteacher, unless the complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher. You should then receive a written response.

- Taking Matters Further:

If your complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, or if you are dissatisfied with the Headteacher's response to your formal complaint letter, then you will need to contact the Governors.

You should send written details of your complaint, with any correspondence and evidence to support your complaint, to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address. If, for some reason, you do not feel able to do so, you should contact the Clerk, via the school, who will record your complaint as a statement for you to sign.

The Governors will investigate your complaint and write to advise you of the outcome.

- The Final Stage:

The decision of the Governors is normally final. However, if you are dissatisfied with the Governors' response, you can take your complaint to a final stage, to an external body. You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman on 0300 0610614 or 0845 6021983, or by email [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk) or see their website at [www.lgo.org.uk/schools](http://www.lgo.org.uk/schools)

### **Governors' Complaints Procedure**

- If a parent/carer is not satisfied with the response from the Headteacher regarding their complaint, or if their complaint is about the Headteacher, then he/she is entitled to take their complaint to the Governing Body.
- All complaints to the Governing Body must be in writing and should include full details of the complaint, enclosing any supporting evidence. This should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors, care of the school. The Clerk will then ensure that the complaints process is started as soon as practicable. (A complainant can request that the Clerk to the Governors writes down the complaint on their behalf where writing a letter is difficult).
- A minimum of three Governors should be selected to form a Complaints Committee to investigate and consider the complaint. It is recommended that the Chair of Governors is not on this Committee. Those Governors chosen should ideally have no knowledge whatsoever of the details surrounding the complaint or of the complainant themselves.
- It is appreciated that this may not always be possible, particularly in some rural schools. However, the Governing Body should always try to find impartial Governors whenever possible.

- Once the Complaints Committee has been formed, they must then decide how they wish to investigate the complaint.
- The Governors effectively have two options available. They can choose to deal with the complaint by means of an oral hearing or through written representations, but in making their decision they must be sensitive to any needs the complainant has. The Local Authority advises that, wherever possible and appropriate, it should be through written representations.
- If the Governors choose to have an oral hearing, the parent/carer will be invited to attend a meeting where they will be able to put their complaint personally to the Governors. The Headteacher should also be present to respond to the complaint. Teachers should not attend. If their evidence is needed, it should either be obtained via the Headteacher or, where this is not appropriate, by a Governor, either before or after the meeting with the parent/carer. The Governors will only make a decision about the complaint once they have heard the parent's/carer's and the school's evidence.
- The structure of such a meeting should be flexible. However, it is anticipated it will follow a similar process to exclusion or admission appeals. The Complaints Committee should have familiarised themselves with the written complaint before the meeting opens and will have an opportunity to ask any questions, as will the Headteacher. The complaint should then be responded to by the Headteacher, with questions from both parties being permitted. Each party can then be asked to summarise their position. Both parties will then leave to allow the Governors to make their decision in private.
- Both the complainant and the Headteacher will be entitled to bring a representative with them if they wish. Although it would not normally be necessary, either party may bring a legal representative if they wish. Either party intending to bring a representative would be expected to contact the Clerk to the Governors before the hearing to notify them.
- If the Governors do not wish to hold an oral hearing - that decision being at the discretion of the Complaints Committee - the investigation will proceed by way of written representations.

- Should the Governors choose to adopt this procedure, the Clerk to the Governors will write to the complainant, outlining the procedure.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the Headteacher who will then have 7 days in which to respond.
- That response will then, in turn, be sent to the complainant for comment, any responses to be provided within 7 days.
- Finally, that response will go to the Headteacher who has 7 days in which to respond to the Clerk.
- A copy of the Headteacher's final response should be sent to the complainant with the advice that it is only for their information and that any further response from the parent/carer will not be considered, except in exceptional circumstances.
- All the responses are then put before the Complaints Committee for consideration.
- For the avoidance of doubt, all communication should be through the Clerk to the Governors. Neither party should send their response to the other directly.
- Regardless of which method is adopted, the Complaints Committee must take a robust approach and not simply endorse the decision of the Headteacher without any consideration of the evidence.
- The Complaints Committee must have all the necessary evidence they feel is necessary for them to make their decision. If they are not satisfied and require further evidence from either party, they should adjourn and request that information. The Complaints Committee should only make their decision if they are satisfied they have sufficient evidence with which to make a final decision.
- The decision of the Complaints Committee should be given to the complainant in writing within five working days of the decision. Providing these procedures are followed, then there is no right of appeal following this decision.

- The decision letter should outline the nature of the complaint, the factors taken into consideration and the decision of the Complaints Committee. There is therefore no need for minutes to include any other information.
- Under the Data Protection Act, parents/carers can request to have sight of all documents relating to their complaint.

**It is important that the complaint and the investigation papers are not attached to the child's file as they do not relate to the child. However, schools may wish to keep a central register of complaints received.**

**Signed:**

**Mr. A. Mitchell  
Chair of Spires Federation Governing Body**

**Date:**

**FORMAL COMPLAINT TO GOVERNORS**

**This action should only be taken once the Headteacher has responded in writing to a formal complaint OR if the complaint is about the Headteacher**

