

Chewton Mendip VA Primary School

Concerns and Complaints : a Guide for Parents and Carers : aims to help you in approaching your child's school when you feel that things are going wrong. This process has been developed to enable schools and parents/carers to work together to resolve issues.

INTRODUCTION

Our school provides many opportunities to keep you informed and involved in your child's progress with regular reports, open days and visits all helping the process. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and good atmosphere in the school, and questions and concerns are usually dealt with quickly and helpfully.

However, sometimes parents and the school do have a misunderstanding, but this can often be sorted out by speaking to the right person. Your concern can then be looked into and a response given.

The first step in resolving any concern or complaint is to discuss the issue with the school. It is important to be clear about the issue you wish to discuss and you may find that it helps to talk it through with a relative or friend. It is also important to remember that, although you may want a decision or situation to change, it is best for all parties if the discussions can end on a positive note with no bad feelings.

Following the 'complaints process' can help ensure that this happens, and a two-way conversation with the school can help you to understand how they see the situation and give you the chance to say what it looks like to you.

What should I do first?

It is best to raise any concerns early on, before they grow into a problem or complaint. Always start by arranging to discuss an issue with the Class Teacher. It is best to make an appointment to ensure that you have enough time and the right setting to talk things through. Just 'dropping in' at the beginning or end of the school day is not usually the most suitable time. Mutual courtesy is expected and ensures things go smoothly. There should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Most problems are solved in this way

What if I am still unhappy?

Ask for an appointment with the Head Teacher. It may help to give the school some times when you are free so an appointment can be made for a time which suits you both. If your child has special educational needs you may want to contact Parent Partnership to talk about your concerns (01823 355578). Before attending the meeting it would be useful for you to put your concerns down in writing. Both you and the school can then focus on finding a solution. When attending the appointment you may take a friend or family member with you, if you wish.

What should I expect to happen as a result of this meeting?

After the meeting the Head Teacher may need to undertake further investigations to inform his/her decision and help achieve resolution. He/she will write to you outlining the investigation and giving details of any action (if appropriate) to be taken within a mutually agree timescale.

What if I feel the Head Teacher has not answered my question or investigated my query?

If you are still unhappy you may, if you wish, ask the Governing Body to hold a review. This now becomes a formal process.

What will I need to do?

Write to the Clerk to the Governors (via the school office), within 10 school days of receiving the Head Teacher's response, stating that you wish to make a formal complaint. Make it clear what it is you are complaining about and what you would like the Governors to do. You cannot introduce new or different complaints at this stage.

What will happen next?

A Panel of Governors (none of whom will have been involved with the complaint thus far) will undertake a review.

The Clerk to the Governors will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient date, time and place for you to meet with the Panel, and will send you a Governing Body Review Request Form to complete and return.

You will be invited to meet with the Panel within 15 school days to explain your concerns. You may bring a family member or friend if you wish. This could be anyone you think will be able to support you.

After the meeting the Panel will then review and/or investigate the Head Teacher's handling of and response to your complaint and decide if it was appropriate and fair. They may wish to meet with any staff or witnesses who can provide information.

They will write to you within 15 school days of your meeting to explain their decision. This decision will usually be final.

What do I do if I am still unhappy?

If you are still unhappy after having received the written decision made by the Governors' Panel then you may raise your complaint with the Secretary of State for Education (www.education.gov.uk).

Remember the whole process exists so that everyone's views can be heard. The aim is that the complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with. Communications with school are welcome, and the latter stages of this complaints procedure are rarely used but remain part of the process.

Helpful Websites:

Somerset Parent Partnership

www.somersetparentpartnership.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education

www.ace-ed.org.uk

Department for Education - Parent Centre

www.parentcentre.gov.uk

Ofsted

www.ofsted.gov.uk