Complaints Policy

Rationale
Positive relationships and effective communication are key in supporting every pupil’s learning at Heathbrook. The school has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers.

Safeguarding Concerns
Should the subject matter of your request be a safeguarding or child protection issue, please ask to speak to a member of safeguarding team: Stephanie White, Frances Greenburgh or Ben Roberts.

Informal Resolutions
In almost all situations, concerns and complaints can be handled informally by speaking to a member of staff. In the first instance please request a meeting with your child’s classteacher at a mutually convenient time, as it is not always possible for a teacher to discuss a complaint at the beginning or end of the school day in front of other parents or carers and children. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress; they always want to know about something that may affect a child’s learning and take action as soon as possible. Please note that staff are only able to discuss a pupil with those with formal parental responsibility.

Next Steps
Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through initial contact with the member of teaching staff, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher.

Sharing a Concern about the Headteacher
Should a parent have a complaint about the headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to the chair of governors chairofgovernors@heathbrook.lambeth.sch.uk, who is obliged to investigate it.

Further Information
To formally record a concern, please complete the Complaints Procedure Formal Record Form (see appendix 2) in full. You can also read the London Borough of Lambeth's School Complaints Policy & Procedure document for further information.
Appendix 1

Unreasonable Complainants

Heathbrook Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Department for Education guidance ‘Best Practice Advice for School Complaints 2016’ defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

• refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
• refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
• refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
• insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
• introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
• makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
• changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
• repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
• refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
• seeks an unrealistic outcome;
• makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

• maliciously;
• aggressively;
• using threats, intimidation or violence;
• using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
• knowing it to be false;
• using falsified information;
• publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Heathbrook Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.
Appendix 2

Complaints Procedure Formal Record Form

This section to be completed by the complainant

Name:
Relationship with School (eg parent of a pupil):
Address:
Daytime Telephone number:
Evening Telephone Number:
Summary of complaint
Please set out the details of your complaint (providing as much detail as possible, particularly dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved). You may attach additional sheets if required but please be as concise as possible.

Individuals involved
Please provide the names, job title and contact details of any people involved in your complaint, including witnesses.

What action have you taken to resolve the complaint informally?
Please provide a brief summary of the outcome and why you feel that your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily. If no, please provide a brief summary why you have not tried to resolve the complaint informally.

Please provide a brief summary of the resolution you are seeking

Signature: Date:

For completion by the headteacher or governor investigating the complaint

Name of investigating Headteacher / Governor:
Date of meeting with the complainant:
Conclusions reached/decisions made/actions agreed following the meeting:

Date complainant notified of the outcome: