



South Grove Primary Complaints Policy & Procedures

July 2014

South Grove Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedures





Our vision is.....

For all our children, the heart of our school to be.....

Creative, inspired and challenged, resourceful, resilient and empowered to participate in our local and global communities.....included, valued and safe.....part of a learning family, communities growing together..... Independent, enquiring and reflective learners.

Aspiring to be the very best that they can be.

SCHOOL AIMS

We offer

- ◆ high expectations
- ◆ high quality learning and teaching experiences
- ◆ a secure and caring community
- ◆ an attractive and stimulating environment
- ◆ equality of opportunity

We seek

- ◆ to promote a child's self esteem
- ◆ to enable each child to experience success
- ◆ to challenge each child to improve by setting targets
- ◆ to nurture each child's creativity and problem solving abilities
- ◆ to encourage each child to have respect for themselves and others
- ◆ to enable each child to take personal and community responsibility

We value

- ◆ each child's contribution
- ◆ a partnership with parents and the community
- ◆ the active involvement of parents and community members

Introduction

We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. If parents remain unhappy they should discuss their concerns with the Headteacher informally and every attempt will be made to resolve any issues.

If the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, the formal complaints procedure can be invoked.

Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We will give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we will put the interests of the child above all else. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and we aim to respond effectively and appropriately to any complaint received.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to, and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement.

The complaints process

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

Stage 1

Where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.

The Headteacher will make sure that she

- establishes **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarifies the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meets with the complainant or contacts them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarifies what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interviews those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conducts the interview with an open mind and is prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keeps notes of the interview.

Should any parents have a complaint about the Headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the governing body, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

Stage 2

Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the chair of governors.

The governing body complaints panel must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

After hearing all the evidence, the governors will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parents satisfaction.

Stage 3

If the complainant remains dissatisfied s/he will be referred to the local authority who will investigate to ensure that the school has followed its policy in dealing with the complaint. The complaint itself will not be re-investigated. Stage 3 is undertaken by the Executive Director of Children and Young People Services (attention of the Business Support Manager).

Monitoring and review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

This policy will be reviewed every-3 years, or before if necessary.

November 2011

South Grove Primary School
Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Headteacher / Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name :

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint

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

Signature:

Date:

.....

Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- 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

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- b) The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to recognize the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- c) An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- d) Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- e) The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

The panel or group of governors considering complaints needs to be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panels' decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and to be followed by their witnesses
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.