

**Southfield and Bessacarr
Primary Schools**

**School Complaints Policy &
Procedure**

Status: Statutory

Date for review: Autumn Term 2016

Policy for Hearing and Dealing with Complaints

Each school is committed to working in close partnership with all members of the school community. The schools place great value on the role which parents, carers and others 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.

If, at any time, a member of the school community has a concern about an aspect of life at school, the concern will be dealt with by the school as quickly, sympathetically and effectively as possible. It is hoped that most concerns will be settled amicably at this stage.

However, if there is a continuing concern, this can be directed through the formal stages as outlined in the school complaints procedure, detailed on the following pages.

School 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. It can then be investigated more effectively whilst information is fresh in the minds of all parties.

The schools operate a 4 stage complaints procedure. If the complaint concerns the conduct of the head it will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 3.

Stage 1 – Informal: Complaint heard by staff member

In the first instance, it is hoped that the complainant will be able to discuss the issue with the member of staff concerned.

The schools will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing the complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complainant should refer the complaint to the Executive Headteacher (EHT) or Heads of School (HoS), who will refer it to another member of staff.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the complaint will be referred to another member of staff via the EHT or HoS. The member of staff will consider the complaint objectively and impartially.

If the first approach is made to a governor, they will refer the issue and the complainant to the appropriate person and advise the complainant of the procedure. Governors will not act unilaterally outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the process.

Stage 2 --- Formal: Complaint heard by the head/principal

The complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1, and/or wish to pursue their initial complaint. If so, the complainant should submit the complaint in writing, to the EHT or HoS, within 10 school days of Stage 1 being concluded. A copy of the complaint form is attached to this procedure.

The EHT/HoS may delegate the task of collating information concerning the complaint to another staff member, but not the decision, nor the action to be taken. The EHT/HoS will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue. Subsequent to this meeting the EHT/HoS will write to the complainant summarising the outcome reached and the process for appeal.

Stage 3 --- Formal: Complaint heard by the chair of governors

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2 the complainant may take their complaint to the chair of governors.

The complainant will need to write to the chair of governors, care of the school, within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 2. The complainant should

provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the EHT/HoS letter concluding Stage 2 and give details in writing of why they are not satisfied with the outcome.

The chair will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue, having met with the EHT/HoS. The chair will write to the complainant at the conclusion of his investigation with the outcome reached and the process for appeal. The complaint will move on to Stage 4 if the complainant remains dissatisfied by the outcome.

Stage 4 --- Formal: Complaint heard by the governing body Complaints Appeal Panel

The complainant needs to write to the chair of governors within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 3, notifying that they wish their complaint to be heard by the complaints appeal panel. The chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a governing body complaints appeal panel.

The governors' appeal panel hearing is the last school based stage of the complaints process and is not convened to merely rubber stamp previous decisions. Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body will nominate 3 governors to have delegated powers to hear the complaint at this stage. These governors must have no previous knowledge of the complaint. The panel members will consist of one governor from the Federation and the other governors of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. The complainant is allowed to attend the panel hearing and to be accompanied if they wish. Complainants have the option of presenting a five minute verbal address to the panel at the hearing.

The panel will choose their own chair.

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.

The complainant will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within 5 days. The letter will confirm the end of the school and governing body's involvement with the complaint. The complainant should be advised that the local authority has no role unless the complaint relates to a service provided by the local authority.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision they can put their complaint to the Department for Education via their schools complaints form on their website ([https://www.gov.uk/complain--- about--- school](https://www.gov.uk/complain---about---school)).

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:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: