

SOUTHFIELD SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1.0 **GENERAL**

1.1 The school's complaints policy allows parents/carers and others' complaints about school issues to be dealt with efficiently and sensitively, and at the appropriate level.

1.2 Complaints may cover a wide variety of matters that concern parents. The school expects ALL parental complaints to be taken seriously and to be dealt with comprehensively and as far as possible in confidence. The majority of complaints received by any school fall into the following categories:

- **financial and administrative;**
- **academic** (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- **pastoral** (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child etc);
- **child protection** (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).

1.3 **Objectives**

1.3.1 The policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents, students and others are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so.

1.3.2 As far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.

1.3.3 A parent/carer, student or other complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 3-5 working days of having made the complaint.

1.3.4 If parents, students or other complainants wish to register a formal complaint they should be asked to complete the school's formal complaint form and return it to the headteacher unless the complaint is against the headteacher when it should be returned to the chair of governors.

1.3.5 Parents must be made aware of how they may obtain a copy of the school's complaints procedures.

2.0 **FORMAL PROCEDURE**

2.1 **Outline:**

Stage 1 - complaint heard by staff member (who is not subject of the complaint)

Stage 2 - complaint heard by headteacher

Stage 3 - complaint heard by governing body's complaints appeals panel

2.2 All staff and governors should be conversant with the procedures.

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To be reviewed: Biennially

Next review date: October 2019

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2.3 Stage 1

- 2.3.1 All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' and students' complaints, recognising that however ill-founded the complaint might be it is a matter of great concern to the parent/carer or student.
- 2.3.2 If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly, this should be done. Otherwise, the complainant should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and the relevant person should be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible.
- 2.3.3 The member of staff receiving the complaint must use the school's complaints form to inform the relevant senior member of staff. This does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the senior colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.3.4 If the relevant senior member of staff considers that he/she can deal with the complaint he/she should attempt to do so. If a resolution cannot be found, the senior member of staff should inform the complainant of their right of appeal to the headteacher (Stage 2) or governing body (Stage 3), and inform the headteacher/governing body of the action taken.
- 2.3.5 If the complaint concerns a child protection issue, the 'named person' (Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)) responsible for a child protection complaint should be informed by the senior member of staff.
- 2.3.6 If the complaint involves an allegation of abuse or misconduct by a member of the school staff, the headteacher should be informed immediately.
- 2.3.7 If a serious complaint is made by a student, the member of staff should immediately inform the relevant senior member of staff (DSL). It will be the responsibility of the senior member of staff (DSL) to determine whether he/she can deal with the issue, what the next course of action should be, including referring the matter to the headteacher.
- 2.3.8 If a trivial/simple verbal complaint is made it might be possible in most cases to resolve it immediately. In more serious cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing. This is to ensure that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by the members of the school staff.
- 2.3.9 In any cases of doubt, members of staff should seek the advice from one of the deputy headteachers.
- 2.3.10 If the appropriate senior member of staff cannot resolve the complaint, they must refer the matter to the headteacher (Stage 2).
- 2.3.11 At Stage 1 the school should aim to acknowledge the complaint within no longer than 3 working days. Where this is not possible, the senior member of staff managing the complaint will inform the parties of the action being taken, and when it is anticipated that the matter can be resolved.

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2.3.12 If a complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been dealt with appropriately, the matter can be moved to a stage 2 complaint and be dealt with by the headteacher.

2.4 **Stage 2: Complaint heard by headteacher**

2.4.1 The headteacher will decide the outcome at this stage, but may delegate the collation of information to a senior member of staff.

2.4.2 The headteacher must normally acknowledge the matter within 3 working days of receiving notification of the complaint. In abnormal circumstances a longer time scale can be agreed, either by agreement with all parties, or by a decision of the chair of the governing body if no agreement is reached.

2.4.3 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way in which the matter has been dealt, it is open to the complainant to make representations to the governing body. (Stage 3)

2.5 **Stage 3: Appeals to the governing body**

2.5.1 Complainants who are not satisfied by the headteacher's decision regarding the complaint can make representations to the governing body.

2.5.2 The complainant must be advised by the headteacher to write to the chair of the governing body giving details of the complaint. The chair will nominate a panel of governors (including one person who is independent of the governing body) to hear the appeal.

2.5.3 The hearing must be within 10 working days of the chair receiving notice of the complaint.

2.5.4 The complainant must be told of his/her right to be accompanied by a friend, but no professional support and where relevant, translations/interpreters must be arranged by the clerk to the governing body in consultation with the parties.

2.5.5 The nominated governors will agree procedures with the chair of governors who will report them to the next governing body meeting.

2.5.6 The governors will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible is put at ease.

2.5.7 Careful consideration must be taken when the complainant is a student.

2.5.8 The governors will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome.

2.5.9 The governor/panel can:

- i. dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
- ii. uphold the complaint in whole or part;
- iii. decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint;
- iv. recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures.

2.5.10 The governing body's decision is binding and must be communicated to the parties within 3-5 working days of the hearing.

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2.6 Reporting and Recording:

- 2.6.1 In all cases it is important for staff to use the school's complaints form so that the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form. When a complaint has been dealt with, all forms and other documentation must be retained by the senior member of staff and placed in the student's file, unless the matter has been dealt with by the named Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a serious complaint is against a member of staff, in which case the headteacher will retain confidential information.
- 2.6.2 The headteacher and senior staff will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.
- 2.6.3 The headteacher will report to staff from time to time, and to the governing body each term on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.
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3.0 **RESPONSIBILITIES**

3.1 **The governing body**

To approve:

- the policy, procedures and guidelines, hear and deciding on appeals, receiving reports, and advising the headteacher.

The governing body will:

- monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes at meetings of the full governing body.

3.2 **Chair of the governing body:**

To receive:

- complaints at Stage 3, to nominate a Chair of the panel to hear the appeal and to check that the correct procedure is followed.

3.3 **Nominated Governor or Chair of the Panel at Stage 3:**

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the panel includes one person who is independent of the Governing body
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;

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- any written material is seen by all parties.

3.3 Clerk to the governing body

The clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant at Stage 3:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record the proceedings;
- notify the parties of the decision.

3.4 **Headteacher:** for the overall internal management of the procedures, for hearing complaints at the second stage, ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed.

3.5 **Relevant Senior members of staff:** for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures, for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints, for keeping parents, students and others informed of the procedures and for compiling reports for the Headteacher as required.

3.6 **PA to the Headteacher:** for administrative and environmental queries and complaints.

3.7 **Head of Finance:** for financial queries and complaints.

3.8 **Heads of Curriculum/Subjects:** for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.

3.9 **Student Services Team/Progress Leaders:** for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall student progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

3.10 **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** for child protection issues.

3.11 **All staff:** for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and students and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns forthwith; for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or students to the relevant senior member of staff.

Attached: Complaints Form and Information for complainants

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SOUTHFIELD SCHOOL COMPLAINT FORM

Member of staff receiving complaint:				
Complaint received from:				
Complainant's relationship to school	Student	Parent/carer	Neighbour	Other
Date and time complaint was received:				
Complaint:				
Action Taken:				
Outcome:				
Issue Passed to: Date/time:				
Seen by senior member of staff (Name): Date/time				

Please attach any other relevant documents.

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COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Outline:

Stage 1 - complaint heard by staff member (who is not subject of the complaint)

Stage 2 - complaint heard by Headteacher

Stage 3 - complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeals panel

Please ask for a copy of our Complaint Policy and Procedures

RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair of the Governing Body	Receives complaints at Stage 3 and nominates a governor or panel to hear the appeal and to check that the correct procedure is followed.
Headteacher	Overall internal management of the procedures; hearing complaints at the second stage, ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed.
Senior members of staff	Operation and management of the policy and procedures, for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints, for keeping parents/carers students and others informed of the procedures, and for compiling reports for the Headteacher as required.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	All Child Protection matters must be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

All may be contacted at the school address.

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