

# Welford, Sibbertoft and Sulby Endowed School

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

This document sets out the policy for dealing with concerns, grievances and complaints.

### 1. Use

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the School
- Complaints about the School's operational arrangements

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should relate to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months.

This policy should **not** be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment;
- Complaints about the actions of a governor;
- Complaints about the actions of another parent;
- Allegations of abuse;
- Issues between the School and community groups/School Association/Welford Pre School

These matters will be dealt with by:

Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment. (There is a separate staff grievance procedure).

Complaints about the actions of a governor. (This should be reported to the Chair of the Governing Body in the first instance).

Complaints about the actions of another parent. (This should be reported to the Headteacher who will investigate whether action can be taken by the School).

Allegations of abuse. (Any allegations of abuse should be discussed with the Headteacher or a senior staff member in the first instance). **For a definition of abuse, refer to the School's Child Protection policy.**

Issues between the School and community groups including School Association and Welford Pre School will be resolved by the Headteacher.



## 2. Status

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states the need to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the School and to any community facilities or services the School provides. The law also requires the complaints procedure to be publicised.

## 3. Purpose

The School's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders. The Governing Body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self-evaluation and raising standards. All stakeholders should feel that their concerns or complaints can be voiced and will be considered seriously. The School takes informal concerns seriously and aims to resolve them at the earliest stage in order to reduce the number that develop into formal complaints.

The underlying principle is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure will not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. Staff will endeavour to resolve issues on the spot.

Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

## 4. Applicability

The policy shall apply to all employees and governors of the School. It is the shared responsibility of the Headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to ensure that these groups are made aware of the policy and procedure.

## 5. The Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent panel *where necessary*;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the School's staff so that services can be improved.



## 6. Concerns

Parents/carers with concerns are encouraged to discuss these informally with the class teacher, without the need for any formal procedure. It is hoped that most concerns can be easily resolved by discussion. Though the class teacher will make any necessary record of such conversations, it is not expected that it will be necessary for the School to write to the parents/carers as a formal record.

## 7. Complaints

Should the concern not be satisfactorily resolved or the parents/carers consider that the difficulty cannot be resolved informally, they are asked to write to the Headteacher, who is the School's complaint co-ordinator, setting out the detail of the concern.

## 8. Role of the School's complaints co-ordinator

At each stage, the complaints co-ordinator will make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview and keep a record of the complaint;
- set realistic time limits for each action with each stage;
- if it is necessary to set new time limits advise the complainant of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay;
- identify and confirm the areas of agreement between the parties;
- clarify any misunderstandings.

## Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the School will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;



- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review School policies in light of the complaint.

It is useful if complainants state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the School could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

## 9. Complaints procedure

The procedure is as follows:-

### Stage One:

- Stage one should take the form of an informal discussion between the school and parents/carers. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage and parents/carers wish to pursue the complaint they should then move to stage 2 of the procedure. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, discussion should be with the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governor can be contacted by parents/cares leaving their preferred contact details with the school office.

### Stage Two:

- Formal complaint. Parents wishing to pursue a complaint should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. If the complaint is about the Headteacher it should go in writing to the Chair / Vice-Chair of Governors c/o the school office.

### Stage Three:

- Complaint addressed by Governing Body's Complaints Panel. The Panel will not include any Governor involved at an earlier stage.

A dissatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage.

If at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with the School's legal representatives.

If complaint is about the Headteacher (formal); then it will be referred to the Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing body. They will take advice as necessary to determine the appropriate action.

There will be clear communication at each stage throughout the handling of the complaint. A copy of this will be retained for reference.



## **10. Vexatious Complaints**

The complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

## **11. Governing Body Review**

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals and will be a statistical analysis so as not to jeopardise any potential further actions.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the School and the Governing Body will be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

## **12. Publicising the Procedure**

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedure to be publicised. A copy of the complaints policy will be made available to all families.

## **13. Record Keeping**

- Stage one shall be considered as a raised concern and dealt with verbally
- At stages 2 and 3 shall be dealt with as a complaint through written correspondence. A copy of all written communication shall be retained for future reference.

Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific child would be kept within the child's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of 7 years.

**Policy agreed: July 2014**

