



# **Fair Hill Primary School**

**Policy Statement**

**for**

## **Handling Complaints**

## **GENERAL STATEMENT**

At Fair Hill Primary School we welcome views and comments, which can be used to maintain and improve our service. This policy is designed to establish a clear mechanism for the resolution of complaints which can be verbal or written. Our policy is to take informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage to avoid them developing into formal complaints.

## **AIMS**

The aims of the Policy and Procedures are to:

- Provide an opportunity for the complainant to express their concerns and know that they have been heard.
- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be simple, accessible, impartial, fair and non-adversarial.
- Allow swift handling with established time limits and keep people informed of progress.
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Keep the school's Senior Management team and Board of Governors informed so that services can be improved.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- At the Informal (oral) Stage the complaint will be dealt with by the class teacher or the Principal.
- If the matter progresses to the Formal Stage the Principal will assume responsibility for managing the process.
- If the Principal is the subject of the complaint, the Chair of the Board of Governors will assume responsibility.
- The Board of Governors' Complaints Sub-Committee will investigate and resolve complaints which proceed to Step 4 of the (formal) procedure.
- If the Chairman is the subject of the complaint, the Board of Governors will nominate another Governor as a Complaints Co-ordinator and the Complainant will be informed accordingly.

### **The Teacher (Step 1)**

The Teacher will:

- listen to the details of the complaint
- seek to resolve the complaint by informal means
- keep the Principal informed

### **The Principal (Steps 2 and 3)**

The Principal will:

- listen to the details of the complaint
- seek to resolve the complaint
- keep the Chairman of the Board of Governors informed

- respond to formal written complaints by acknowledging receipt of the complaint, carrying out an investigation, notifying the complainant of the outcome and implementing any agreements or changes as a result of a complaint

### **Board of Governors**

The Governors will:

- ensure that the school has a Complaints Policy
- make the policy available
- ensure that the policy is being implemented
- seek advice from the Board
- follow guidance issued by the Board
- ensure that any recommendations arising from a complaint are implemented

### **Chairperson of the Board of Governors (Step 4)**

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- arrange a Complaints Sub-Committee
- check that the correct procedure has been followed

### **Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors (Step 4)**

The Complaints Sub-Committee will:

- consider the complaint in an independent and impartial manner
- investigate the complaint and gather evidence from relevant parties
- decide whether or not the complaint should be upheld
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and recommendations

### **Chairperson of the Complaints Sub-Committee (Step 4)**

The Chair of the Complaints Sub-Committee will ensure:

- the remit of the Sub-Committee is explained to the parties and each party has a chance to present their case
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- parents and others are put at ease during the meeting
- that the dates, times and venues are convenient to all parties
- proceedings of meetings are recorded
- meetings are conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- the Sub-Committee is open-minded and independent
- no member of the Sub-Committee has a vested interest in the outcome or has been involved at an earlier stage
- each side is given an opportunity to state their case and ask questions
- that written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises all parties should have the opportunity to consider and comment on it
- all parties are notified of the Sub-Committee's decision

### **Chair Person of the Board of Governors (Step 5)**

The Chair person of the Board of Governors will:

- acknowledge receipt of the request for an appeal

- arrange an Appeals Sub-Committee meeting
- ensure that correct procedures have been followed

### **Role of the Appeals Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors (Step 5)**

The Appeals Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors will:

- consider the complaint in an independent and impartial manner
- review the evidence submitted by relevant parties
- give the complainant an opportunity to present their case to the Appeals Sub-Committee
- interview any other relevant parties if deemed necessary
- decide whether to uphold the complaint or not
- inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and any recommendations

**The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.** At the end of the process the Chairperson will inform the complainant in writing that the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is considered closed.

### **Southern Education and Library Board**

The SELB will:

- provide advice and support to school staff and the Board of Governors on the application of the Complaints Procedure
- provide professional advice to the Principal and Board of Governors
- not play a part in the Complaints or Appeals Process other than as indicated above. Neither is there a role for the Department of Education in resolving complaints on this procedure

The Complaints Sub-Committee can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complain 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.

### **Record Keeping**

The Principal and Chairman of the Board of Governors shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning the complaint. These shall be held confidentially in the school for five years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

### **Discourteous Behaviour Towards a Member of Staff**

In the event of a member of staff being approached in threatening or discourteous manner, the person concerned will be given a written notice stating that they should not re-enter the school premises for any reason without first contacting the Principal to arrange a visit. The letter will state that the decision has been taken so as to protect the pupils and staff in the school and to avoid the potential for a further similar incident, which could have more serious consequences. A copy of the Complaints Procedure will be enclosed with the letter.

## PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT

The following steps should be taken in sequence and only as far as is deemed necessary to secure a satisfactory outcome.

### Informal - Step 1

Speak to the appropriate member of staff.

***If it is likely to require more than a few minutes, make an appointment to discuss the issue at a time that suits.***



### Informal - Step 2

Speak to the Principal.

***Make an appointment to discuss the issue. Step 2 may be taken instead of (or as well as) Step 1 depending on the issue.***



### Formal - Step 3

Put the complaint in writing to the Principal.

***A written complaint will receive a written acknowledgement within 10 working days. The complaint will be investigated; agreements or changes will be implemented. Outcomes will be confirmed in writing within 20 working days.***



### Formal - Step 4

Put the complaint in writing to the Chair Person of the Board of Governors. It will be referred to the Governors' sub-committee.

***A written complaint will receive a written acknowledgement within 10 working days. The complaint will be investigated; the Chairman may meet with the complainant; agreements or changes will be implemented. Outcomes will be confirmed in writing within 25 working days.***



### Appeals Process – Step 5

Submit a written request to have the case heard by the Appeals sub-committee of the Board of Governors.

***Acknowledgement of receipt of the written complaint will be issued within 10 working days. The complaint will be investigated; a meeting will be arranged with the Appeals Committee within 30 working days; agreements or changes will be implemented. Outcomes will be confirmed in writing by the 40<sup>th</sup> working day.***

The school will not deal with anonymous complaints except for the referral of child protection concerns.

## APPENDICES

1. Flow Chart of Procedure
2. Sample letters for acknowledgment of receipt of written complaints
3. Sample letter for use in the event of threatening or discourteous behaviour towards a member of staff