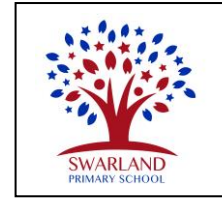


# **Swarland Primary School**

## **"The Best That We Can Be"**

### **Complaints Policy**



#### **Introduction**

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

If any parent or member of the public is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately or the Headteacher.

We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures set out by the LA and DFE Complaints Toolkit 2014. If the school cannot resolve any complaint itself, those concerned can ask the LA to intervene.

All parents have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

#### **Aims and objectives**

Our school aims to be fair, transparent and honest when dealing with any complaint. All complaints are given due consideration and are dealt with as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

In creating this policy it has been underpinned by key principles:

- 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 person 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 senior management team so that services can be improved.

## **The Complaints Process**

**3.1** 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. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress. If a member of the public has a concern about the school the matter should be addressed by the Headteacher in the first instance.

**3.2** Where a parent feels 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 at this stage. The formal procedures will need to 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.

**3.3** Should a parent or member of the public have a complaint about the Headteacher, s/he 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 a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

**3.4** 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.

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

**3.6** After hearing all the evidence, the governors 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 parent's or member of the public's satisfaction.

**3.7** If the complaint is not resolved, a parent or member of the public may make representation to the LA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

**3.8** If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

## **Investigating complaints**

**3.9** At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes 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 or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

## **Resolving complaints**

**4.0** 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.

**4.1** It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to 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.

**4.2** The school 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.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

**5.0** There may 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 GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond. Should a complainant raise an entirely new, separate complaint, it must be responded to in accordance with the complaints procedure.

## **6.0 Monitoring and review**

**6.1** 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.

**6.2** 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 via the school website, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Read alongside serial and persistent complaints policy.

Revision Record of Issued Versions			
Author	Creation Date	Version	Status
Louise Fletcher	07.5.13	1.0	Pending Governor consultation – no change
Changed by	Revision Date		
School	03.09.13	2.0	Draft adapted version for consultation with staff and trade unions
School	17.11.14	3.0	Pending Governor Consultation
	19.7.16	3.1	Reviewed (no amendments) and pending Governor consultation.
	13.3.17	3.1	Agreed for publication
	19.9.18	3.1	No changes except to signpost serial and persistent complaints policy