



## 1 Introduction

**1.1** At Fairlawn primary School we strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher and 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/carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

**1.2** If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately or refer to appendix 1 for guidance on communication procedures. We stress that there is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. We take informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints.

**1.3** Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect your child or you.

**1.4** This policy is available from the school office and will be published on our website.

## 2 Aims

**2.1** Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved within established time limits.

## 3 The complaints process

<p><b>Stage 1. Informal.</b> Expression of concern made to the school.</p>	<p>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 or if it is another concern refer to our communication procedures to identify the best person to contact. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. Most issues can be resolved quickly.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2. Complaint</b> Concerns raised formally with designated complaints officer (the Headteacher).</p>	<p>Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Headteacher (using the proforma appendix 2) and will be acknowledged within three school days. The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. The Headteacher reserves the right to allocate the investigation to another member of staff where deemed appropriate. However all investigations will be conducted by an SLT member. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The outcome of the Headteacher investigation will be communicated to you <b>within</b></p>

	<p><b>20 school days</b> in the form of a written response, with full explanation of the decision and the reason for it, as well as any action taken. If the complaint is about the Headteacher the matter should be referred to the Executive Head. If the complaint is about the Executive Head the matter should be referred to the Chair of Governors.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3. Governing body.</b> Complaints rarely reach this formal level, but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Panel.</p>	<p>Complaints at this stage should be written and received within <b>10 school days</b> of the Headteacher's decision. Your letter should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and should set out why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The Governing Body Complaints Committee will consist of 3 people – none of whom will have been previously involved in your complaint. They will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary you should be given adequate notice to prepare. The committee will make their decision in private and write to you within <b>7 school days</b></p>
<p><b>Stage 4. Final Complaints Stage</b> If all attempts to resolve the complaint have failed, you may refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">www.education.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. Decision is made by recommendation and will be provided <b>within 15 days</b> where possible.</p>

**3.1** Should any parents have a complaint about the Headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of Governors, who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair of Governors will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

**3.2** Should any parents have a complaint about the Executive Headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of Governors, who is obliged to investigate it. The Executive Headteacher will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

**3.3** In the case of a vexatious complaint where, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to re-open the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**3.4** An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

## **4 Investigating complaints**

**4.1** It is suggested that at each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Ensure there are no telephone conversations between the school and the parent/carer. All communication should be made in writing a letter. We accept meetings can be booked by phone with the admin staff.
- 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 further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes and have a minute taker (office manager) in all meetings.

## **5. Resolving complaints**

**5.1** At each stage in the complaint both schools and the complainant 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 that was the basis of the complaint will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld.
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

**5.2** An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence

## **6. 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 stage 2 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, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

**6.3** All SLT members will be fully aware of procedures and trained accordingly and will be involved in reviewing the policy. All staff to be aware that a member of SLT will handle all formal complaints. This policy is reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

