



POLICY FOR	Parental Complaints
AUTHOR	
COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE	Children, Achievement and Community
NEXTREVIEW DATE	Autumn 2017
REVIEWED BY	Sarah Parry
COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE	
GOVERNORS SIGNATURE	
HOW THE GB WILL MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF THE POLICY	

Parental Complaints Policy

Introduction

As a school we aim to provide a good service to families and provide an excellent education for the children. We hope very much, for every aspect of school life to run smoothly. It is the case however, with all the many interactions that parents may occasionally have concerns which they wish to raise. We will always listen and very much aim for an informal resolution. If you have any issues, then usually the first person to approach is your child's class teacher or office staff. If however the issue is not resolved, this policy gives you the background and details of the complaints procedures. We hope very much for good, positive relationships with parents and carers, and wish to work in close partnership with you.

Our complaints policy therefore is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be non-adversarial
- Provide confidentiality
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly through the correct procedure
- Address all the points at issue
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur.

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

Complaints fall into two categories. Those concerning statutory provision and those related to the delivery of education and everyday occurrences within the school. The initial procedures are the same in both cases but in the case of statutory provision the complainant, if not satisfied with the outcome has the right of appeal to the LA.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction however made, by a person with a legitimate interest in the school, but not employed to work at the school, about school policies and procedures, the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff employed at the school and the standards of teaching and learning.

Initially most complaints will be verbal. There should not be a requirement for the complainant to put their complaint in writing at informal stages.

If an anonymous complaint is received the Head teacher will use their discretion as to how to proceed but will not necessarily dismiss any such complaint.

Governors who are approached by parents with complaints will refer them back to the Head teacher, if the complaint is about the Head teacher they will refer them onto the Chair of Governors.

All complaints will be taken seriously. It is extremely important to our school that we foster excellent relationships between home and school. It should be remembered at all times that everyone is entitled to have their point of view properly discussed.

Complaints will be dealt with as swiftly as possible as we recognise that failure to address complaints promptly often results in greater dissatisfaction.

The person who has received the complaint will inform the parent of their actions in relation to the complaint, in the first instance, in person or then by phone.

It is important to note that complaints and concerns about occurrences which took place more than three months before will generally be deemed "out of time" as information regarding past incidents/occurrences are difficult to collect accurate information for due to the long time lapse.

MOST parental concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with by a pupil's class teacher. Class teachers can be informed of parents concerns by speaking to them informally, or by making an appointment to discuss concern in detail.

If a parent is not satisfied with the class staff's response or their complaint is about a member of their child's class staff they may wish to take the matter to the Phase Leader and then the Head teacher.

They will then further explore the matter and will inform the parent of their findings and any action taken as appropriate.

If a parent is still not satisfied they will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

They will either arrange a meeting with the parent and Head teacher or can investigate the matter on behalf of the parent if so requested.

The parent can also ask the Governing Body's Complaints Panel to look into the matter further if all of the above does not provide the parent with a satisfactory outcome.

This panel will meet with the parents and if necessary the Head teacher and hear the parents complaint. Witnesses may be asked to attend this meeting or submit information as appropriate.

Please note that Southmead School follows Wandsworth's complaint procedures. More information about this document can be gained directly from the LA.

Autumn 2016

SOUTHMEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

How to make a complaint Complaints and how they are dealt with

If your complaint is about the school

Please follow Step 1(a) below and contact the Headteacher.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher

Please go directly to Step1(b) below and contact the governing body of the school.

If your complaint is about the governing body

Please go directly to Step 2 below and contact the Director of Children's Services.

Step 1(a)

If you make a complaint, the Headteacher will investigate it and contact you in writing in reply, and/or meet with you to discuss your concerns.

Step 1(b)

If you are unhappy with the way the Headteacher has dealt with your complaint, or if your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should contact the Chair of Governors at your school. The school governors will look into your complaint and will write to you with a reply.

Step 2

If you are unhappy with the way the governing body has dealt with your complaint, or if your complaint is about the governing body, you can contact the Director of Children's Services at the Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PU.

The Director will investigate your complaint and will write to you with a reply.

Step 3

If you are still unhappy you can write to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will look at your complaint independently and make sure that it is thoroughly investigated. You can contact the Chief Executive at Wandsworth Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW13 2 PU.

We aim to resolve all complaints as quickly as possible. If we cannot deal with your complaint immediately, we will send you an acknowledgement within five working days and aim to send a final answer within ten working days. If your complaint is a complex one and cannot be answered within this time, we will keep you regularly informed.

Vexatious Complaints

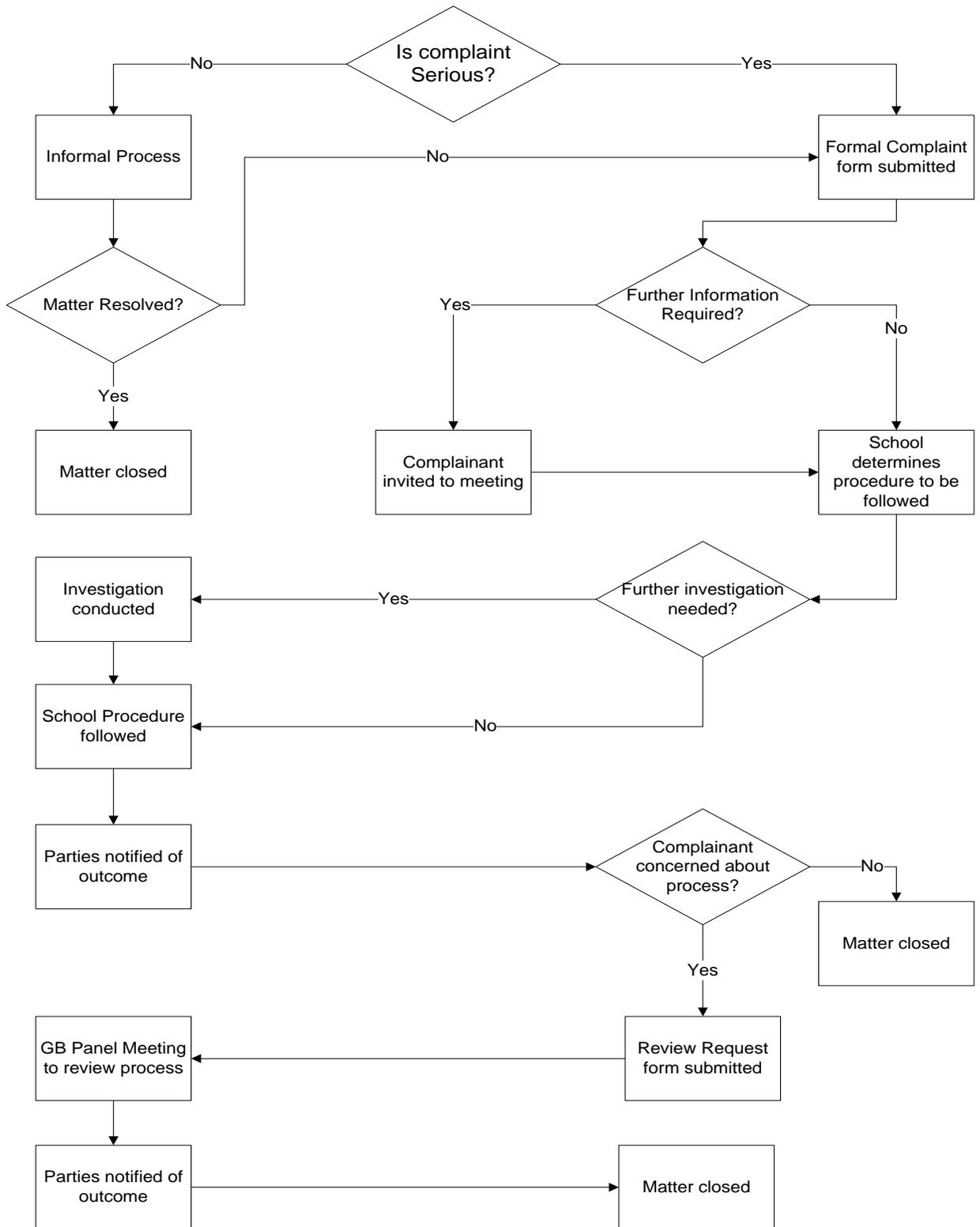
Very occasionally the governing body may decide a complaint has become 'vexatious' or 'spurious'. If this is the case, the governing body will be unable to deal with the matter under their policy. The types of complaints which the governors may define as vexatious may have one or more of the following characteristics;

- Parents/carers may have not identified any specific actions of which they might complain
- Their concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which they complain.
- The concerns that they identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of their complaint is no longer available.
- The substance of their complaint has been addressed under this procedure already.
- The concerns that they raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- They have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.

If parents/carers wish for the decision to be reviewed then they may take advantage of the procedure set out in the school's Formal Complaint Procedure, by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

This is to be read alongside the Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complaints.

Summary of Process to Resolve Complaints



Southmead School Policy For Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing Or Abusive Complainants

The head teacher and governing body are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

The aim of this information is to provide further understanding about our school policy on unreasonably persistent complainants or harassment of staff.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- actions which are
 - out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
 - persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
 - personally harassing, or
 - unjustifiably repetitious
- an insistence on
 - pursuing unjustified complaints and/or
 - unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
 - pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (eg using abusive or threatening language; or
 - making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook; or
 - refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure.

Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority.

Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body will not tolerate ANY form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- **ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;**
- **request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);**

- **prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.**
- **call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.**

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

May 2014