



**Sandringham Primary School**  
& Sandringham Pre-School

A great place to be two



# **Sandringham Primary Pre-School and Daycare**

## **Complaints Policy 2021**

## **Raising concerns and resolving complaints**

From time to time parents, and others connected with the school, will become aware of matters which cause them concern. To encourage resolution of such situations the Governing Body has adopted a "Complaints Procedure".

The procedure 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
- Address all the points at issue
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur.

## **Making a complaint?**

Complainants can be parents/carers of pupils registered at a school or it could be a member of the wider community or someone representing an ex-pupil. However, anonymous complaints will be dealt with under a different procedure.

## **Investigating complaints**

Schools must ensure that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint:-

- Establishes what has happened so far
- Identifies who has been involved
- Understands the nature of the concern or complaint
- Knows what issues remain unresolved
- Have contacted the complainant to establish and clarify information
- Have spoken to or interviewed those involved as required
- Conducts meetings with an open mind and be prepared to persist with questioning and finding the answer
- Keeps accurate records of the complaint including notes of any meetings, discussions and if required arrange for a minute/note taker.

## **Resolving complaints**

Schools must acknowledge and register complaints from complainants. The possible outcomes of a complaint will be one or more of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- An apology
- An explanation of what actually happened, clarification of the facts
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or more appropriately
- An assurance that the event complained of will not reoccur
- 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.

## **Dealing with vexatious complaints**

On occasions, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant continues to be dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the School Governing Body 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.

It is important to note however that, should a complainant raise a new, separate complaint, it must be responded to in accordance with the school complaints procedure.

## **The 4 Stages of the Complaints Procedure**

Schools and nurseries have in place a complaints procedure which is clearly defined.

### **Stage 1 – Informal**

The complaint is dealt with by an appropriate staff member (who is not the subject of the complaint).

In the vast majority of cases, a concern can and should be resolved by contacting the appropriate member of staff. This may be the subject teacher, year group leader or other designated staff member directly involved with the reported problem.

The initial communication from the complainant to the member of staff may be by letter, telephone conversation or in person by appointment. The complainant must allow the designated staff member at least 5 days to respond to the concern.

If this does not lead to a resolution of the problem then the concern/complaint must be referred to the next stage of the process which is the commencement of the formal process.

### **Stage 2 – Formal (if unresolved at Stage 1)**

The complaint is heard by the Head Teacher.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the member of staff at Stage 1 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher who will deal with it formally at Stage 2.

Where the Head Teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complainant should be advised to address it to the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is being dealt with by the Chair of Governors this will bypass Stage 2 and go to Stage 3 of the formal procedure and heard by the Chair of Governors.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied and what action they would like to resolve the complaint. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns.

The Head Teacher must acknowledge the complaint within 5 days by writing to the complainant. The acknowledgement should state a further communication will follow, within 20 school days that will set out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The Head Teacher can delegate another senior member of staff to carry out the investigation and report their findings to them. The Head Teacher will then reach a conclusion based on the investigation. All

notes relating to the investigation should be kept on file. The investigating officer may feel it necessary to meet with the complainant. If this happens, then notes should be produced of the meeting.

The investigating officer will then compile a report detailing their findings. Any recommendations or actions proposed must be considered by the Head Teacher.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached, the Head Teacher must notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion and any actions that will be taken as a result. The decision can be communicated by the Head Teacher to the complainant in writing or, if they may feel it appropriate, meet with them first to communicate their findings and then confirm in writing afterwards.

*Useful model letters are attached in Appendices C and D.*

The complainant must also be informed if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome they can write to the Chair of Governors outlining why they are still unhappy.

### **Stage 3 – Formal (if not resolved at stage 2)**

The complaint is heard by the Chair of Governors (this will be delegated to the vice-chair or other nominated governor if appropriate).

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Head Teacher at Stage 2 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors for consideration at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision, the recommendations and actions of the Stage 2 complaint and what they require to resolve the matter. They may also attach any evidence to support their concerns that can be additional to that submitted at Stages 1 and 2.

The Chair of Governors must write to the complainant within 5 days of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge this. The letter should state that another letter will follow within 20 school days setting out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The Chair of Governors will look at all the information pertaining to the complaint submitted by the complainant and the investigatory evidence by the school at Stages 1 and 2. The Chair may want to talk with the complainant or investigating staff members to establish facts and obtain further information.

*Useful model letters are attached in Appendices C and D.*

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached on the complaint, the Chair of Governors will notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion.

The conclusion could be:

The evidence indicates that the complaint was substantiated and therefore upheld

The complaint was substantiated in part and what action will be taken

The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence and therefore not upheld

The complainant is also informed if they are still dissatisfied they can write to the Governing Body directly via the school or, Governor Services or School Management Support at Newham Partnership Working outlining why they feel the complaint is unresolved.

#### **Stage 4 – Formal (if not resolved at Stage 3)**

The complaint is heard by the Governing Body. This is the final stage of the process.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair) at Stage 3 they should be advised that the next stage is to put their complaint in writing to the School Governing Body at Stage 4.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision of the Chair, recommendations and actions of the Stage 3 complaint and what they feel would resolve the matter. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns in addition to that submitted at Stages 1, 2 and 3.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 school days.

The complaint is considered by a panel of Governors who form a complaints appeal panel. The panel must be independent and impartial. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The panel must have a cross-section of categories of governors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. If appropriate the panel can be made up of governors from another school.

The panel must convene a meeting to discuss the complaint and all the investigation evidence to make a final decision on how to progress. A clerk should be appointed to take notes of the meeting and records must be kept. A useful checklist for a panel hearing is attached in Appendix 2.

The head teacher has a statutory duty for the internal organisation and management of the school, which they must carry out in accordance with any rules, regulations or policies laid down by the governing body. Therefore the remit of governors' consideration of a complaint about a matter of internal organisation and control will be as to whether the head teacher has followed any relevant school policies; it is not to substitute its own operational judgement for that of the Head Teacher.

The panel can decide:

To convene a meeting with the complainant. If a meeting is to be convened, the person chairing the meeting either the Chair or Vice-chair (whomever did not deal with the complaint at Stage 3), will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 10 school days. The letter would also include the date, time and venue of the convened meeting to hear the complaint.

#### **Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint**

For non-complex complaints, not to meet with the complainant, but to use all the information available to them and make a decision on the complaint as there is enough information to allow for a decision to be made.

Possible outcomes for the Panel:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend changes to school systems or procedures to ensure that similar do not occur

An outcome letter will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days of the meeting.

*A model response letter is attached in Appendix F.*

#### **4. Further information**

The outcome letter from the School Complaints Panel exhausts the 4 Stage procedure. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the process, they are able to contact:

The Secretary of State for Education  
 The School Complaints Unit (SCU)  
 Department for Education  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate  
 Manchester  
 M1 2WD

The SCU will examine if the school complaints policy and any other relevant processes were followed. The SCU will also examine policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the SCU will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint.

#### **Information used to write this policy**

Newham Partnership Working - Managing school complaints in maintained schools  
 DFE

March 2021

Review date	
Person responsible	



**Model Forms**

**Sandringham Primary School  
Meeting Request Form**

I wish to meet *[name of teacher]* to discuss the following matter:

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to the matter to be discussed)

Your Address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

e-mail address:

**Signed** .....

**Date** .....

[Please complete this form and return it to the school office]

**School use:**

Date Form received:

Date response sent:

Received by:

Response sent by:



## Sandringham Primary School Formal Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the school office or to the Head Teacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name: .....

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

.....

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

.....

Your Address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

E-mail address:

**Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc...), to allow the matter to be fully investigated:**

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.

**Number of Additional pages attached -**




Date:

**School use:**

Date Form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:	
Date:	



## Sandringham Primary School Complaint Review Request Form

Please complete this form and return it to Head Teacher (or Clerk to the governing body), who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name: .....

Your Address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

E-mail address:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on ..... and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to ..... and I received a response from ..... on

.....

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response(s) from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.

**Number of Additional pages attached =**

--

**School use**

Date Form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Request referred to:	
Date:	



## Model Letters

### Response to spurious complainant

Date

Dear [Name of complainant]

Thank you for submitting your concern in the letter received on the [insert date]. After careful consideration, unfortunately, I am unable to deal with this matter under the Governing Body's Complaints Procedure. This is because:

*[We suggest that you include one of the following statements]*

- The substance of your complaint has been addressed under the complaints procedure already.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure *[suggest alternative for example: admissions policy, exclusion policy, behaviour policy, grievance procedure etc]*

If you wish my decision to be reviewed then you can follow the school's Formal Complaint Procedure, by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
Or Chair of Governing Body



## Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint *and* invitation to meet

Date

Dear [Name of Complainant]

I have received your formal complaint, dated ..... I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore, I would like to meet with you, as soon as possible, so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. You are welcome to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, if you would find this helpful. *Please telephone..... in order to arrange an appointment. **OR** I can offer you an appointment at .... on ,..... Please let me know if this is convenient.*

I hope that we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not I will ensure that the appropriate investigation takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
Or Chair of Governing Body



## **Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint referred by a third party [e.g. LA, Diocese, MP]**

Date

Dear [Name of Complainant]

I have received a copy of the documentation that you sent in to ..... setting out a complaint about ..... This has been passed to the school as it has responsibility for these matters.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore I would like to meet with you, so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. Please telephone ....., in order to arrange an appointment. **OR** I can offer you an appointment at ..... on ..... Please let me know if this is convenient.

Meanwhile I would be grateful if you would complete and return the Formal Complaint Form that is enclosed, along with details of the school's complaints procedure.

I hope that we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not I will ensure that the appropriate investigation takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
Or Chair of Governing Body



## **Acknowledgements of receipt of formal complaint and advising complainant that the matter is being dealt with under a confidential school procedure**

Date

Dear .....

I have received your formal complaint, dated ..... . I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint seriously. Therefore I have initiated an immediate investigation. It is possible that the investigator will wish to meet with you to clarify the evidence that you have provided so far. If so, he/she will write to you to make suitable arrangements.

As your concerns relate to the conduct/capability of a member of staff, the investigation will be carried out under the school's personnel procedures. This means that the detail of the procedure and its outcome **must** remain confidential to the school and the member of staff concerned.

**OR**

As your concerns relate to the behaviour of a pupil, the investigation will be carried out under the school's pupil conduct and disciplinary procedures. This means that the detail of the procedure and its outcome must remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child concerned.

In due course, I may be able to provide you with some information about the outcomes of the investigation and the processes that have been followed, but in any event will let you know when the matter has been concluded.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
Or Chair of Governing Body



## Notification of Decision Regarding Formal Complaint

Date

Dear .....

Following receipt of your complaint and careful consideration of all the available relevant evidence, I/the panel have/has concluded that:

The concern is not substantiated by the evidence in that .....

**OR**

The concern was substantiated in part/in full, as ..... The school will review its practices/procedures..... with the intention of avoiding any reoccurrence. Parents will be informed in due course of any policy changes.

**OR**

In order to address fully the matters investigated, the school has initiated appropriate internal procedures. Due to the nature of these procedures, their outcome must remain strictly confidential. We are confident, however, that the circumstances that gave rise to your complaint should not recur

**OR**

In order to address fully the matters of concern that you identified, the panel recommended that the governing body should review it's ..... policy, as a matter of urgency. We are confident that this should prevent similar concerns arising in future.

I hope that this will now conclude the matter and we can look to the future working together for the benefit of your child's and the school.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher/Chair of Governing Body/Chair of Panel





## Review Outcome Notification

Date

Dear

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint.

Summary of reasons .....

Therefore, we now consider the matter closed.

**Or**

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except .....

Therefore, the following action will be taken .....

Once this action has been completed the school will consider the matter to be closed.

**Or**

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except .....

However the panel determined that this procedural failure did not affect the outcome of the consideration of your complaint so, while we regret this error, we will now consider this matter to be closed as far as the school is concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Complaints Review Panel

c.c. Head Teacher  
Chair of Governors