



# COMPLAINTS POLICY

SANDON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Mrs R Beckett (Principal)

Review date: September 2024

## Introduction

Sandon Primary Academy is committed to providing the best education for our young people and wants our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community.

We are aware that there may be occasions where people have concerns or complaints and the following procedure sets out the steps that should be followed in order to resolve these as quickly and informally as possible.

School governing bodies are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints. It is expected that all complaints will be referred to the academy in the first instance. In situations where it has not been possible to settle a complaint through this process the Local Authority may be able to advise parents/carers and the academy in order to help resolve difficulties, but will not be able to become involved if the steps set out below have not been followed.

## Aims

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 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.

## The difference between a concern and a complaint

A 'concern' may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important for which reassurances are sought*'. A complaint may be generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

Sandon Primary Academy takes concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

## Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). Schools must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

## Timescales

These guidelines have been written to ensure that all complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible by the school. The length of the period of time to respond to and resolve complaints will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. The intention is that all complaints should be responded to within 28 days.

Sandon Primary Academy ensures that they comply with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The school encourages parents to make complaints using the complaint form (appendix A).

Any complaint made in person, by telephone, or in writing is recorded in a complaints log to prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said. Brief notes of meetings or calls will be added to the log. Sandon Primary also logs the final outcome of the complaint.

## Levels of Complaint

There are 4 levels which define the procedure for making a complaint;

- *Level 1: Informal meeting with the class teacher*
- *Level 2: Informal meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team*
- *Level 3: Formal complaint letter to the Principal*
- *Level 4: Formal complaint to the Local Authority*

## Level 1: A First Informal Meeting

- The complainant should start by telling the class teacher about their concern/concerns. This is usually the best and quickest way of resolving issues.
- It is recommended that the complainant makes an appointment to speak to the class teacher as soon as possible as this will give both parties the opportunity to talk about the issue in an appropriate manner and without being interrupted.
- It is important that the complainant recognises that the academy is a busy organisation and it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away.
- The purpose of the meeting should be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a realistic resolution to the problem. It is good practice for the class teacher to make a brief written record of the concern raised and any actions agreed.

## Level 2: A Second Informal Meeting

- If the complainant feels dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the class teacher, they should ask for an appointment to meet with the Principal or a Vice Principal.
- The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the nature of the ongoing concern, what has been discussed with the class teacher so far and any actions arising from the initial meeting. It is in everyone's interest, particularly the child or children, for concerns to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.
- However, it may be that the Principal or Vice Principal will need to look into what has happened since the initial meeting before they can suggest how the complainant's concern might be resolved. If this is the case, it should be agreed how and within what timescale they will contact the complainant to let them know the outcome of their enquiries and what actions they have taken/proposed to take.
- The Principal or Vice Principal will make a brief written record of the concern discussed and what has been agreed and to write to the complainant summarising this.
- It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved at this stage through the informal process.

## Level 3: Formal Complaint to the Principal (see APPENDIX A)

- If the complainant feels that the issue/issues raised has/have not been resolved through the informal process and they wish to pursue it further the complainant may raise it through the formal procedure. To do this the complainant must write a formal letter of complaint to the Principal. The complainant's letter should set out clearly the concern which has previously been discussed and why the complainant feels that the issue is unresolved. It is also helpful if the complainant can set out in their letter what resolution they are seeking.
- Moving to the formal complaints procedure is a serious step. In consideration of future home/school relationships everyone concerned will need to concentrate on finding a resolution to the issue and negotiate an agreement as to how this can best be achieved.
- The Principal will consider the complaint and in doing so should:
  - *establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;*
  - *clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;*
  - *meet or contact the complainant if they need further information;*
  - *clarify what the complainant feel would put things right if this has not been set out in the complainant letter;*
  - *interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;*
  - *conduct any interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;*
  - *keep notes of any interview for the record*
- The Principal will 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 (n.b. this is not an admission of negligence);*
  - *an assurance that the event complained of will not recur.*

## Level 4: Formal Complaint Letter to the Academy Trustees

- Where the complainant is unhappy about the decision the Principal has made about their complaint, this does not become a complaint about the Principal. If the complainant feels that the complaint has not been resolved the complainant should move to Step 4 of the procedure.
- If the complainant has a concern or complaint that is specifically about the Principal and which has not been resolved at the informal stage, then the complainant must write a formal letter of complaint to the Trustees. The academy will provide the complainant with the Trustee's names and the complainant should write to them at the school address, marking the envelope 'urgent, private and confidential'.
- The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 5 school days
- Time limits: Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. As such, complaints made under this procedure must only relate to incidents or concerns occurring within the last 12 months. The complainant's complaint will not usually be able to be considered if their child no longer goes to the school.

# Appendix A: Formal Complaint Form

To be completed if issue unresolved after Levels 1 & 2 are followed. To be sealed in an envelope (marked private and confidential) and handed to the school for the attention of the Principal.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):</b>	
<b>Relationship with the academy (e.g. parent of a child):</b>	
<b>Your address:</b>	
<b>Contact telephone number:</b>	

**Details of your complaint (including dates, names etc. and whether you have spoken to someone about it already - continue on a separate sheet if necessary):**

**What action – if any – have you already taken to resolve your complaint AND what actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details**

**School use**

Date received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by: