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**Our Vision Statement**

Sherington Primary School is an inclusive community. We place the child at the centre of all that we do. We strive to maintain the highest standards in an environment that is creative, stimulating, inspiring and enabling.

**Aspire**

* Motivating and exciting all to become life-long learners

**Believe**

* Developing the skills and confidence to foster self-belief

**Create**

* Engaging all learners through creative practice and personal reflection

**Achieve**

* Experiencing success and embracing future challenges

**Our Aims**

To place the child at the centre of all that we do.

To foster positive, supportive relationships with families and the wider community.

To provide models of excellence drawing on the expertise of our highly skilled team.

To provide an enquiry based curriculum, that promotes the values of resilience, adaptability and perseverance.

To promote life-long learning through developing a whole school culture

of challenge and growth.

To prepare learners for a future in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

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| Policy Reviewed  |  December 2017 |
| Agreed by Staff |  January 2018 |
| Ratified by Governors |  February 2018 |
| Date due for review: |  February 2020 |

We believe our school provides an outstanding education for all our children and that the headteacher and other staff have very positive relationships with parents. However the school is obliged to have procedures in place in the event there are concerns or complaints from parents. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school will follow.

**School Complaints Procedure**

**General Principles:**

* This staged procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides.
* A **concern** is an expression of worry about what may appear to be a low level issue. It is important to deal with a concern seriously at the earliest stage in order to reduce the likelihood of it developing into a complaint. Concerns are dealt with under the “informal stage” of the procedure.
* A **complaint** is a formal expression of dissatisfaction in writing and will require a formal written response. The school will deal with any matter as a complaint when the person raising the matter requests it at any point or when informal attempts to resolve the concern have been exhausted and the person who raised the concern remains dissatisfied.
* An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances
* To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

**Raising a concern or complaint**

1. **Informal Stage**

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be in person by appointment, by letter, or email. Appointments or phone calls may be requested using a “Meeting Request” form available from the school website or from the school office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the head teacher (or to the chair of the governing body, if the complaint is about the head teacher).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office or the clerk to the governing body (contactable via the school office). Refer to Attachment 1 for a list of appropriate contacts in various situations.

**2) Formal Stage**

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you may choose to put the complaint in writing and pass it to the head teacher, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the head teacher, your complaint should be passed to the clerk to the governing body, for the attention of the chair of the governing body.

A ‘School Formal Complaint’ form can be collected from the school office.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates, times and locations of events, and copies of relevant documents.

Parents, however, should not attempt to investigate the matter themselves outside of the remit of speaking to their own child. At no point should parents take it on themselves to interview other children, collect witness statements or approach other parents with a view to investigating or sorting the matter themselves. Parents need to allow time for the school to carry out its own investigations.

It is very important also that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the head teacher, or to the clerk to the governing body, as appropriate and marked ‘confidential’.

The head teacher (or chair) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the head teacher (or chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion. You may request a meeting to discuss or explain the findings.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to

the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed. A ‘Review Request’ form can be collected from the school office. Any formal complaint will be tracked by the school office to ensure the correct procedures and timelines are being followed.

All complaints will be logged from receipt by the school office and tracked to completion.

**Review Process**

This stage is a review of the process carried out by the school to investigate the complaint. This will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically. You will be informed in writing of the outcome.

If you believe your complaint hasn’t been resolved at this stage, you can write to the Secretary of State for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>). However the Department for Education is only likely to become involved if the Governing Body is judged to have acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfill its statutory responsibilities by not following the school’s complaints policy. Internal school matters are not in the Secretary of State’s remit. The Local Authority has no statutory power to intervene in such issues beyond giving advice or making recommendations. There is no right of appeal to the Director of Children’s Services or to Members of the Council.

A list of appropriate contacts in various situations is given in Attachment 1.

A summary flowchart of this process is given in Attachment 2.

An overview of roles and responsibilities is Attachment 3.

Attachment 1: Contact person and policy/procedure for various issues



 Attachment 2: Summary of Process to Resolve Complaints

PARENT /CARER HAS AN INITIAL CONCERN

Reply within 3 school days of contact

**STAGE 1: INFORMAL**

INITIAL CONCERN HEARD BY STAFF MEMBER

Meeting arranged within

 5 school days of request

Meeting usually arranged within

 5 school days of request

**STAGE 2: FORMAL**

CONCERN HEARD BY HEADTEACHER/PRINCIPAL

Request within 10 days

Reply within 3 school days of contact

**STAGE 3: FORMAL**

 WRITTEN COMPLAINT RECEIVED BY CHAIR OF GB AND INVESTIGATION CARRIED OUT

Formal response usually within 10 school days

Request within 10 days

Reply within 3 school days of contact

**STAGE 4: COMPLAINT REVIEW**

COMPLAINT HEARD BY GB’S COMPLAINT PANEL

Panel usually convened within 15 school days

Formal response within 10 school days of panel

Note: The school will aim to respond in all cases within the timescales given, however if it proves impossible to meet these deadlines you will be contacted to explain the reasons for the delay and given a revised timescale for response.

IF RESOLVED, COMPLAINT IS CLOSED.

IF COMPLAINT IS NOT RESOLVED, THE FINAL STAGE OF APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION IS WITH REGARD TO PROCESS AND PROCEDURES ONLY

**Attachment 2: Roles and Responsibilities**

**APPENDIX A**

**THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER/PRINCIPAL**

The Headteacher/Principal must ensure that all staff are fully aware of the school complaints policy. It is essential that staff respond appropriately when approached by a complainant with a concern.

 If the complainant still feels aggrieved after a meeting or discussion with a member of staff, they should be advised to speak to the school office to arrange a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher/Principal.

During both stages of the complaints process there is an opportunity to offer support and a solution to the complainant. Any agreement or undertaking should be followed up by a letter and the offer of a further meeting to discuss how things have improved and to review the position.

If the complainant feels that they have had regular communication and that their concerns are taken seriously and that all steps are being taken to ensure the matter is being resolved, it is likely the complaint will be resolved at this early stage.

If the complainant is not happy and the process becomes more formal the Headteacher / Principal must ensure that all statements are signed and dated. Teachers’ statements must be written in a professional way, which reflect the good management of the school.

The Headteacher/Principal would be expected to be interviewed for the informal stage- Stage 2.

The Headteacher/Principal would be expected to attend the formal hearing.

**The Role of the Investigating Officer**

The Chair of Governors is often the Investigating Officer, but does not need to be.

If the Chair carries out the investigation or nominates another governor to act as the Investigating Officer he/she will not be able to sit on the complaints panel due to having prior knowledge of the matter.

The Investigating Officer should not be a staff governor, or a co-opted member of the staff.

The Investigating Officer must receive all the relevant documentation including the written formal complaint, any statements and evidence already gathered. They must arrange to meet with the Headteacher/Principal and any other staff involved. It is imperative that the complainant is offered a meeting with the Investigating Officer, even if they have already been given a full report of the complaint. If the complainant is not available to meet, they should be offered a telephone conversation. The role of the Investigating Officer is to ensure that everyone involved has an opportunity to explain what they know, and the complainant needs to feel they have had the chance to speak to someone independent of the school staff in order to resolve their complaint.

Once the investigation has been completed, a full report must be written which clearly sets out the findings and decision. This will be that the complaint is upheld in part, or in full, or if the complaint is overturned in full or in part. The complainant and Headteacher/Principal should receive the decision within 10 working days of the completion of the investigation. A covering letter will be sent to the complaint with the report and it will inform the complaint if they are not happy with the final decision of the investigation, they can request a meeting of the governing body complaint’s panel.

If the complainant chooses to request a Governors’ Panel Hearing, they must write formally to the Clerk to confirm that they are not happy with the outcome and would like a Governor’s Panel Hearing to be convened.

**THE ROLE OF THE CLERK**

The Clerk will only become involved in the process if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Investigating Officer’s investigation.

The complainant will be informed that they must write to the Chair or Clerk within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter requesting that a panel of governors be convened. The letter should be acknowledged within 3 school days and the panel convened within a further 15 school days.

The clerk will contact the complainant and the chair/Investigating Officer for their available dates and times, the clerk should allow approximately 3 hours for the whole process.

The clerk will contact governors who are able to sit on the panel. (Any governors who have been involved in the complaint at an earlier stage cannot sit on the panel.) The panel must consist of 3 governors. It is good practice for the composition of the panel to reflect the mix of the governing body, such as a LA governor, a parent governor and a co-opted governor, gender and ethnicity should be considered if possible.

The School and the complainant will send their evidence and relevant documentation to the clerk. The clerk will send a completed bundle of documents to the complainant and the Headteacher/Principal and governors’ panel at least 5 days in advance of the meeting.

Any evidence or documentation submitted to the Clerk after the receipt of the final bundle can only be presented at the hearing with agreement from all parties. If evidence is submitted late, the hearing may be adjourned for a short time to allow either party to consider the new evidence.

The clerk must ensure that the complainants, governors and Headteacher are clear about the process, so a short meeting with each party is recommended before the hearing.

The clerk must ensure that the school representatives, complainants and, if appropriate, the Investigating officer are all invited into the meeting room at the same time. All parties must remain in the room together so if someone needs to leave, the meeting must be adjourned.

The clerk will prepare a short agenda for the meeting; an example of an agenda is:

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| DRAFT AGENDA1. Introductions and Welcome by the chair of the panel
2. Chair to confirm that all parties have received the paperwork (bundle of documents) in advance and that they have had an opportunity to read the documents;
3. Chair sets out the process and the ground rules, such as treat each other with respect and courtesy and no use of inappropriate language;
4. Complainant sets out their complaint to the panel and why they are not content with the outcome of the Investigating Officer investigation;
5. The school representatives (Headteacher/Principal or the Investigating Officer) and governors have an opportunity to ask questions;
6. The school representatives explain the actions they have taken, and the reasons for decisions made.
7. Complainant and panel members have an opportunity to ask questions;
8. The chair will confirm with all parties that they have every opportunity to make their case and ask questions
9. The chair will ask the complainant and the school representative to sum up their case.
10. The chair will inform the complainant and school representatives that they will receive a decision letter within 10 school days and ask them to leave the room
11. The panel deliberates
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The clerk will minute the meeting formally. A copy of the minutes will be checked and approved by the Chair of the panel. The clerk will send the decision letter to the complainant setting out the findings and final decision. The letter will also contain the complainant right of appeal to the Secretary of State should they remain dissatisfied with the Panel’s decision