

## **COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS**

All maintained schools and academies are required to have a procedure in place for dealing with complaints relating to the school and any community facilities or services that the school provide.

All staff of South Lincolnshire Academies Trust are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and believe that school and parents must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help students gain the most from their time with us.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it to, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

### **THE FIRST STEP**

Please arrange to discuss any concerns with your child's form tutor or, with the particular teacher concerned. Historically, most problems can be sorted out this way.

### **THE SECOND STEP**

If after speaking to your child's teacher you do not feel that your complaint has been properly dealt with, or if your concern is about the conduct of a particular teacher, then you should discuss the matter with that teacher's manager (for instance, the head of department for a particular curriculum subject or the head of year).

### **THE THIRD STEP**

If you are still unhappy about a situation you should raise the matter with the Deputy Executive Headteacher. In almost all cases we can sort things out.

### **THE FOURTH STEP**

At this stage, if you are still unhappy, you should make a formal written complaint to the Executive Headteacher, unless the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher.

If your complaint is about the conduct the Executive Headteacher, or if you are dissatisfied with the Executive Headteacher's response to your formal complaint letter, then you will need to contact the governors.

You should send written details of your complaint, with any correspondence and evidence to support your complaint, to the SLAT Clerk to the Governors at the following address:

SLAT Clerk to the Governors  
South Lincolnshire Academies Trust  
Bourne Academy  
Edinburgh Crescent  
Bourne PE10 9DT

If, for some reason, you do not feel able to do so, you should contact the Clerk on 01778 422365, who will record your complaint as a statement for you to sign.

The governors will investigate your complaint and write to advise you of the outcome. The decision of the governors is normally final however, if you are still dissatisfied that your complaint has not been dealt with to your satisfaction, you can take your complaint to the Education Funding Agency as follows:

By post: Academies Central Unit (Academies Complaints)  
Education Funding Agency  
Earlsdon Park  
53-55 Butts Road  
Coventry CV1 3BH

Email: [academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk](mailto:academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk)

However, unless your complaint is about the governors' response, what you have said will have to be considered first by the governing body of the Trust.

## **GOVERNORS COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

- If a parent is not satisfied with the response from the Executive Headteacher regarding their complaint or if their complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, then he/she is entitled to take their complaint to the Governing Body.
- All complaints to the Governing Body must be in writing and should include full details of the complaint, enclosing any supporting evidence. This should be sent to the clerk to the governors, at the address indicated above. The clerk will then ensure the complaints process is started as soon as practicable (a complainant can request that the clerk to the governors write down the complaint on their behalf where writing a letter is difficult).
- The Chair of Governors will decide whether to deal with the complaint in person or refer the complaint, if deemed to be of a more serious nature, to a panel of governors.
- The Chair of Governors will deal with the complaint in person, without the need to progress to a panel of governors if the issue/complaint links to a school operational issue or a matter of school procedure.

- Regarding complaints linked to operational issues or those related to school procedure, the Chair of Governors will provide a response within 7 working days in writing.
- Where a complaint is deemed more serious, such as issues related to child protection or safeguarding, panel of governors will be made up, this must be made up of a minimum of three governors should be selected to form a complaints committee to investigate and consider the complaint. It is recommended that the Chair of Governors is not on this committee. Those governors chosen should ideally have no knowledge whatsoever of the details surrounding the complaint or of the complainant themselves.
- It is appreciated that this may not always be possible and the Governing Body will always try to find impartial governors wherever possible.
- Once the complaints committee has been formed, they must then decide how they wish to investigate the complaint.
- The governors effectively have two options available. They can choose to deal with the complaint by means of an oral hearing or through written representations, but in making their decision they must be sensitive to any needs the complainant has. The governors of the Trust have been advised that wherever possible and appropriate, it should be through written representations.
- If the governors choose to have an oral hearing, the parent will be invited to attend a meeting where they will be able to put their complaint personally to the governors. The Executive Headteacher should also be present to respond to the complaint. Teachers should not attend. If their evidence is needed, it should either be obtained via the Executive Headteacher, or where this is not appropriate, by a governor either before or after the meeting with the parent. The governors will only make a decision about the complaint once they have heard the parent's and the Trust's evidence.
- The structure of such a meeting should be flexible. However, it is anticipated it will follow a similar process to exclusion or admission appeals. The complaints committee should familiarise themselves with the written complaint before the meeting opens and will have an opportunity to ask any questions, as will the Executive Headteacher. The complaint should then be responded to by the Executive Headteacher with questions from both parties being permitted. Each party can then be asked to summarise their position. Both parties will then leave to allow the governors to make their decision in private.
- Both the complainant and Executive Headteacher are entitled to bring a representative with them if they wish. Although it would not normally be necessary, either party may bring a legal representative if they wish. Either party intending to bring a representative would be expected to contact the clerk to the governors before the hearing to notify them.

- If the governors do not wish to hold an oral hearing – that decision being at the discretion of the complaints committee – the investigation will proceed by way of written representations.
- Should the governors choose to adopt this procedure, the clerk to the governors will write to the complainant, outlining the procedure.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the Executive Headteacher who will then have 7 working days in which to respond.
- That response will then, in turn, be sent to the complainant for comment, any responses to be provided within 7 working days.
- Finally, that response will go to the Executive Headteacher who has 7 working days in which to respond to the clerk.
- A copy of the Executive Headteacher's final response should be sent to the complainant with the advice that it is only for their information and that any further response from the parent will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances.
- All the responses are then put before the complaints committee for consideration.
- For the avoidance of doubt, all communication should be through the clerk to the governors, neither party should send their response to the other directly.
- Regardless of which method is adopted, the complaints committee must take a robust approach and not simply endorse the decision of the Executive Headteacher without any consideration of the evidence.
- The complaints committee must have all the necessary evidence they feel is necessary for them to make their decision. If they are not satisfied and require further evidence from either party, they should adjourn and request that information. The complaints committee should only make their decision if they are satisfied they have sufficient evidence with which to make a final decision.