

## Complaints Policy

### Sonning Church of England Primary School



<b>Issue Date:</b>	September 2022
<b>Review Date:</b>	September 2023

**This is a Trust policy to be implemented by all schools within The Keys Academy Trust to ensure a consistent approach across the Trust.**

Complaints Policy for Sonning Church of England Primary School

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Sonning Church of England Primary School works hard to provide a good service to, and have a good relationship with pupils, parents and members of the local community. At the same time, it is recognised that on occasions an individual or group may have a complaint against a member of staff or the school itself. When a complaint occurs the following principles will apply:

- Every complaint is taken seriously
- Resolution of problems will be by informal means wherever possible
- Each complaint will be handled by the most appropriate member of staff
- Procedures will be impartial and non-adversarial
- Complaints will be dealt with as swiftly as possible
- Confidentiality will be respected at all times

**STAGE 1 – INFORMAL PROCEDURES**

Every effort is made to resolve a concern or complaint at this stage. A phone call or a meeting with a member of staff should be sufficient to resolve most concerns. On occasion a senior member of staff might become involved to help resolve an issue. The complainant may wish to meet with the Deputy or Head Teacher to discuss their concerns. The member of staff will make clear the school's response to the concerns raised and may agree certain actions to help resolve the complaint.

Where an approach is made directly to a member of the Governors, the Governor will refer the complainant to the Deputy or Head Teacher.

**STAGE 2 – FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response at stage 1, they can choose to take the matter to the formal complaints stage. They should put their complaint in writing, addressed to the Head Teacher. The person responsible for assessing the complaint and deciding the outcome is the Head Teacher. Where the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will act in this capacity. The formal complaint will be investigated and the decision conveyed in writing within 15 working days of receiving the formal complaint.

The Head Teacher/Chair of Governors can decide to:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part

- Uphold the complaint in whole or part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that issues of a similar nature do not recur

The number and nature of formal complaints will be reported at the next full Governors' meeting via the Head Teacher's report. No details of individuals will be contained in this report.

### **STAGE 3/FINAL STAGE – GOVERNORS' COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (PANEL HEARING)**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 2, they can choose to take the matter to the next stage. They should request this in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will convene a meeting of the Governors' complaints committee within 15 working days of receiving this letter.

The Governors' complaints committee will contain 3 or 5 members. It will not contain Governors who have had previous involvement with this complaint. It will contain 1 member who is independent of the management and running of the school.

The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting/panel hearing and may be accompanied if they wish. The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the panel hearing and clear information on the process to enable them to attend will be given.

It is vital that during the meeting all parties act in a reasonable way. Any behaviour which is aggressive or threatening will not be tolerated. If a complainant behaves unacceptably they may be asked to leave the meeting.

The Governors' complaints committee can decide to:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that issues of a similar nature do not recur

Once the Complaints Committee has reached a decision the Chair will inform all parties e.g. the complainant and where relevant the person/s identified in the complaint of the decision within 5 working days. At this point it should be made clear that the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Documentation will be retained for the relevant period of time on the school premises.

Written records of all complaints, outcomes and following actions will be retained and stored securely.

Although the school will inform The Keys Academy Trust of any formal complaint the Trust will not normally deal with complaints directly or mediate. If you are not satisfied the complaints procedure has been followed, you can make this known to the Trust. However, further action can be taken only if it can be demonstrated that the correct procedure has not been followed.

## **THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY**

As the school is an Academy, the Local Authority cannot investigate complaints. The role of the ESFA is to check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. The ESFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if the ESFA find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly, they will request the complaint is looked at again from the appropriate stage.

### **Persistent Complainants**

This behaviour could be characterised by, for example:

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed

If the complainant pursues substantially the same issue after exhausting the complaints procedure, the school may determine that it will not respond further.