



## **New Forest Small School**

### **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Member of Staff Responsible	Headteacher
Regularity of Review	2 yearly

#### **RATIONALE**

New Forest Small School is committed to providing high quality education which encourages and supports individuals to achieve their very best and so become confident active, responsible and successful members of the community.

The school places great value on its strong parent/school partnership. As a school we are continuously striving to improve the provision of education and therefore welcome feedback and suggestions from parents and other members of the New Forest Small School Community. However, we are also aware that, from time to time, individuals may wish to raise a concern with the school, in which case they are advised to follow this policy and its procedures.

#### **Aim of the Complaints Procedure:**

The aim of the Complaints Procedure is to facilitate the efficient resolution of concerns by providing a transparent and simple process for complainants & staff of the school. The school's role is to:

- Resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- Provide named contacts and a timescale for a response to be made by the school
- Focus on resolving complaints rather than apportioning blame
- Promote confidentiality and discretion
- Be forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive, malicious and anonymous complainants

We believe that the effective resolution of complaints is based on the prompt notification of concerns, a shared trust between the complainant and the school, and a mutual respect for the privacy and confidentiality of information.

This Complaints policy details the steps and process of how the school will respond to general complaints which may be raised by a range of individuals, including parents, carers, visitors, students and members of the local community.

## **STAGE 1 – AN INFORMAL APPROACH**

Initially, any general concerns raised by a parent or carer should be communicated to the appropriate member of staff. Parents may wish to at this stage contact the school to try to resolve their concern.

For non-parental or student complaints, concerns should be communicated in writing to the Headteacher.

If the resolution of a concern is not satisfactorily dealt with at this stage, the complainant may choose to proceed to Stage 2.

## **STAGE 2 – FORMAL WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

Complainants should write to the Headteacher giving details of the concern and provide any relevant information. To assist complainants in this process, a Complaints Form is attached to this procedure (Appendix 1). Further copies are available from the school (please ask in the school office).

If the concern is about the Headteacher, complainants should initially contact the Headteacher. However, if this is felt to be inappropriate or they have already contacted the Headteacher who has given a response, then concerns should be directed in writing to the Chair of Governors at the school address.

The school will acknowledge receipt of any concern addressed to the Headteacher by telephone, letter or email normally within five working days and will give details of proposed action to resolve the concern. Depending on the nature of the concern the school will decide what course of investigation to undertake. A full record of all formal written complaints will be securely held at the school.

The school will endeavour to resolve the concern as soon as reasonably practicable and will communicate the steps taken to resolve the concern within ten working days.

For more complex complaints or complaints requiring an in-depth investigation the Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint and prepare a response normally within twenty working days. Subsequent to any meeting, the Headteacher will summarise the main points in a follow-up letter.

If, after receiving a response to the complaint from the Headteacher, the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed steps for resolution, the Headteacher will write a letter or email providing a final response and refer the complainant to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

## **STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the school's response to their written complaint, they should request in writing for the complaint to be heard at a complaints appeal panel. This request should be made within 10 days of the chair's decision outcome letter.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the panel will be a person who is independent of the management and running of the school. Of the others, two or more will normally be members of the school's Governance Advisory Board. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and is entitled to be accompanied if they wish.

The hearing will normally take place within ten working days of receipt of the complainant's request, unless the case is judged to require further investigation by an emergency meeting of the Governance Advisory Board convened within that ten-day period. In this latter case, the hearing will take place within twenty working days of receipt of the complainant's request.

Once the meeting has been held, a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be communicated to the complainant no later than two working days following the hearing. The letter will set out a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions, if any or outcomes. A copy of the same document will be provided to the person complained about (if applicable), the Headteacher, and the proprietor.

In relation to complaints made about the appropriateness of an exclusion, there is a statutory procedure for reviewing the Headteacher's decision to exclude. This is set out in the school's Exclusions Policy.

#### **STAGE 4 - RECOURSE TO DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

For general school matters, Stage 3 is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. Complainants who believe that the actions of the Headteacher and/or the appeal panel have been unreasonable, or the correct process has not been adhered to, have recourse to the Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ

In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014:

- The following will be undertaken in order to comply with the above regulations: a written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing;
- The number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the previous school year will be made available to parents of students at the school; and
- All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State requests access to them or they are requested during an inspection.



**Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff previously and before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was their response? (Please attach any written responses from the member/s of staff)**

**What would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?**

**Signature**

**Date**

**Official use only**

Initial response and  
Acknowledgement:

By whom:

Date:

Complaints reference number:

Action Taken:

Date:

**Data Protection Statement** – In completing this form, you are giving us your consent that the personal data included in the form may be processed as necessary by the school for the purpose of responding to your complaint. The school undertakes to store your personal data securely while it is necessary to retain it, and to dispose of it securely when appropriate, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.