



## **THE ALICE SMITH SCHOOL Parent Complaints Policy Implementation Guidelines**

### **Introduction**

The Alice Smith School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes very seriously any concerns or complaints they may raise. We recognise and acknowledge the parental entitlement to raise concerns, complain or air a grievance and staff will endeavour to work with parents in the best interests of the students in their care.

Parents are encouraged to raise any concerns with the school as early as possible. This gives the school the opportunity to address the concern, rectify a problem or explain the school's position, before the concern may become more serious.

If a parent is in doubt about whether or not to raise a concern, the school would encourage them to make contact to facilitate resolution. We ask, however, that together the school and parents present a united front to avoid any child receiving damaging mixed messages.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, to which the school will respond.

The staff at the Alice Smith School will ensure that:

- Parents wishing to raise a concern know how to do so.
- The school acknowledges and responds to concerns within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient manner.
- Parents realise and understand that we listen to and take concerns that they have seriously.
- The school will, to the best of its ability, take appropriate action to ensure that concerns are resolved and complaints are addressed.

### **How should a parent raise a concern?**

Parents who have any concern or complaint about school provision for their child should normally raise it in the first instance with their child's class teacher (Primary) or form tutor (Secondary). This can be in the form of a letter, an email, by telephone or by requesting a meeting. We would ask that all communications with the school, whether written or verbal, are conducted in a courteous, constructive and non-aggressive manner. This pertains to communication with teaching and non-teaching staff in equal measure.



If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the class teacher or form tutor, or feels that the matter is sufficiently sensitive or serious, they should contact the Assistant Key stage Leader or Head of Year for that year group. If the matter is regarding the teaching of a specific subject for their child, they should contact the Head of Department in Secondary or Head of Subject in Primary. This person will be able to liaise with relevant staff and put the parent in contact with the appropriate member of the Secondary Leadership Team or Primary Leadership Team. They may also refer the parent directly to the Campus Principal if appropriate. If the incident or concerns is regarding external examinations then communication should be directed to the Vice Principal for Achievement & Progression.

If the matter is concerning a non academic complaint this can be made directly to the school leadership team by completing the [form](#) on the [Parental Portal](#) section of the school website.

Parents may feel that they should contact the Campus Principal directly, especially on a matter of great importance or sensitivity. This is not advisable in the first instance, as such issues will usually be referred back to middle leadership for initial investigation.

Therefore it is best to seek their advice in the first instance.

Parents have the right to contact or write directly to the Head of School on a matter of serious concern. While not discouraged, the issue will be referred back to the Campus Principals and their leadership teams (SLT or PLT) for further investigation. Therefore it is best to seek their advice in the first instance.

The school reserves the right to deviate from this protocol for addressing concerns or complaints where necessary. Discourteous or aggressive actions towards members of staff will not be tolerated and the Campus Principals or Head of School will intervene should this arise, or seem likely to arise.

### **What will happen next?**

If a parent raises an issue face to face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to their satisfaction.

If the parent has made a complaint or suggestion in writing, the person contacted will respond within two working days explaining how they/the school propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person contacted will need to discuss the issue with one or more colleagues and consider further information before responding. The parent will be given a date by which they will receive a response. If a detailed explanation of the issues is needed, a letter, email or report will be sent to the parent as quickly as possible informing them of the outcome of their complaint.



This communication will also explain any action taken or proposed. Alternatively, the parent may be invited to a meeting at the school as a face to face discussion can often diffuse tension and allow opportunity for greater clarity and openness.

The school maintains a written record of all significant parental complaints and their outcome.

### **Confidentiality**

Parental complaints or concerns are treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of the complaint or concern will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents will not reflect adversely on their children in any way.

The Alice Smith School cannot, however, entirely rule out the need to make relevant third parties outside of the school aware of the complaint and the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety and/or welfare was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the relevant authorities. The parent making the complaint would be fully informed.

### **Anonymous complaints**

All complaints must come from an identifiable complainant. Anonymous complaints are discouraged. Although much less credible, anonymous complaints may be considered at the discretion of the relevant Campus Principals or Head of School.

ASSA wishes to assure the safety and confidentiality of the complainant, and therefore undertakes to treat all allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner. A report of the allegation will only be disclosed to those individuals who have a need to know in order to properly carry out an investigation of the allegation.

All concerns raised will be treated fairly, properly and confidentially.

### **What happens if a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome?**

It is the school's aim to address concerns and resolve any complaints to the best of its ability. We hope that any parent/s will feel that their concerns have been fully and fairly considered and that a satisfactory outcome has been reached.

If a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome they should take the following action:

- At middle leadership level, contact the relevant Vice Principal;
- At Vice Principal level contact the Campus Principal;
- At Campus Principal level, refer the matter to the Head of School.



The final resolution of any complaint rests with the Head of School. If a parent wishes to appeal the process by which this final resolution was made, they should refer the matter to the Chair of the Council of Governors.

The Chair of the Council will review the process which led to this resolution by the Head of School. Any complaints received at Council level which have not followed the process outlined in this document will be referred back to the school leadership.

### **Formal Appeals to the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council, or their delegated representative, will request a full report from the Head of School about the process followed to resolve the complaint.

The Chair, or their delegated representative, will inform the parent of the outcome of the appeal and will also offer a meeting if the parent remains dissatisfied.

The Chair's judgement, or that of their delegated representative following the review of the process of resolution of the complaint by the Head of School, will be final.

### **Student complaints, concerns and counselling procedures**

The principles which apply to parental concerns and complaints also apply to complaints and concerns from students. However, there should be and are differences in approach. The teachers and staff at Alice Smith School believe that it is important that students should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.

Students may also use the Alice Smith email system to make a member of staff aware of their concerns in a confidential manner if they so choose. Students may also raise general concerns via class/ tutor group meetings, through the School Counsellor and through School Council meetings.

At the start of each year, the form tutor and class teachers will explain these procedures to their class/tutees in a manner appropriate to their age.

The teachers and staff at the Alice Smith School are determined to ensure that all students know to whom they can turn with if they have a concern or a problem they want to share and to whom they can communicate with if they want to make a formal or informal complaint.



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