



## **SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

Your suggestions are a very valuable way of helping us to improve the services that we provide. If you can think of a way in which we can improve, we want to hear from you!

We will take all suggestions seriously and consider each on its merits. If we decide not to take up your suggestion, we will explain to you the reason for our decision.

If you would like to make a suggestion, you should write to the Principal/Headteacher.

Unfortunately, there are sometimes occasions when things go wrong. Southfields Academy Complaints Procedure is in accordance with DfE guidance.

All complaints are important to us – there is always room to improve and as part of our commitment to excellence, we strive to identify areas for improvement and put things right as quickly as we can.

We aim to deal with your suggestions and complaints in an efficient and understanding way. To do this, we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within 24 hours
- take all complaints seriously and deal with them as quickly as possible
- investigate your complaint thoroughly
- treat your complaint in confidence
- make sure you get a letter explaining the outcome of your complaint

If you have a complaint you wish to raise with us, you must do so within one month of the incident taking place. The complaints form attached to this procedure can be used to report a complaint at Stage 1 and Stage 2 and you should follow the guidelines detailed below:

**Stage 1**           Where possible, we try to deal with your complaint as near to its source as possible. This usually means raising your complaint with the relevant Head of Department, Head of Year or Deputy Headteacher depending on the nature of the complaint. We can usually sort out simple mistakes or misunderstandings straight away. You can make your complaint in person, on the phone or in writing.

We will aim to respond to your concerns in writing within 5 working (school) days. Where this does not prove possible, you will be given an explanation within 5 working (school) days and a date by which we will respond.

**Stage 2**           If you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1, you should contact the Principal/Headteacher and explain the nature of your complaint within 10 working (school) days of your receipt of the initial response. The Principal/Headteacher will look into your complaint and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, a written response will be provided within 10 working (school) days of the complaint reaching Stage 2. If there are exceptional circumstances, you will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response can

be expected. A log of all complaints from Stage 2 onwards is maintained and reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher or Principal, it will be referred straight on to Stage 3 of this process.

**Stage 3** If you are still unhappy, you can write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and explain the nature of your complaint within 10 working (school) days of your receipt of the response. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will look at the evidence collected by the Principal/Headteacher and if necessary conduct further investigations to make sure all aspects are thoroughly examined. The Chair will examine both the process and the outcome of your complaint at the earlier stages. The Chair will write to you about the conclusions and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, a written response will be provided within 15 working (school) days of the complaint reaching Stage 3. If there are exceptional circumstances, you will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response can be expected.

**Stage 4** If you remain unhappy at this stage, you should write to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees and explain the nature of your complaint within 10 working (school) days of your receipt of the response. The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will arrange for a Complaints Panel to hear your complaint.

The Complaints Panel will comprise three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in your complaint; two will be governors of the school, and one will be independent of the management and running of the school. Parents will be allowed to attend the hearing, and be accompanied if they so wish.

The hearing will normally take place within 15 working (school) days of the receipt of the written request for a Stage 4 investigation.

The aim of the Appeal Panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between you and the Academy. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 3 working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain details of what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further, although it should be noted that the panel is the last Academy-based stage of the Complaints Procedure.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

We hope that this procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted and that it will ensure that all complaints are dealt with efficiently and speedily. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Board of Trustees is able under this policy to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If you continue to feel that your complaint is unresolved, you are entitled to complain to the Secretary of State for Education if you believe the Board of Trustees has exercised any of its functions unreasonably. You can do this by writing to: Department for

Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ. You can find out more about how to complain to the DfE by visiting:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/b00212240/making-complaint-school/how-to-complain>

The EFA cannot change the decision an academy has made about your complaint. The EFA can look at whether the academy considered your complaint properly, following a procedure that is in line with legal requirements. If the EFA upholds your complaint it can do one or both of the following –

- ask the Academy to reconsider the complaint from an appropriate stage
- ask the Academy to change this complaints procedure so that it complies with legal requirements.

### **Monitoring Complaints**

1. The Principal/Headteacher will report on the operation of the Complaints Procedure to the Board of Trustees once a year.
2. The Board of Trustees will then suggest or signpost:
  - any significant amendments to the Academy's procedure as a result of the complaints made
  - any issues that have arisen in the operation of the Complaints Procedure.
3. The Principal's/Headteacher's report will respect the confidentiality of the individual's complaint.
4. In the light of the Principal's/Headteacher's report, the Board of Trustees will consider whether or not the Complaints Procedure should be amended in any way.

### **Complaints that are not in the scope of this policy.**

1. Admissions
2. Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
3. School re-organisation proposals
4. Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation

(Concerns about these 4 items should be raised with local authorities (LA).

For school admission, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for Southfields Academy are dealt with by Wandsworth Borough Council.

- Exclusion of children from school

Further information can be found in the Academy's Exclusion Policy which is available on request.

- Whistleblowing

The Academy has an internal whistleblowing policy and procedure for its employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk) or by writing to:

WBHL, Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD

The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.

- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures

The Academy has separate policies and procedures in place for Staff Grievances and Teacher and Support Staff Disciplinary Procedures which are available on request from the Academy.

- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the Academy premises and facilities

The Academy, trading under the Aspire@Southfields name, asks that all organisations that hire or use our premises and facilities have their own complaints policies. Users of these services should contact the service provider directly.

**SOUTHFIELDS ACADEMY**  
**COMPLAINTS FORM**  
**Stage 1 or 2 of Complaints Procedures**

Your Name:	Student's Name:	Year
Your relationship to the student:		
Address:		
Daytime Telephone number:		
Evening Telephone number:		
Please give details of your complaint:		
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint and who have you already spoken to?		
What do you feel the Academy might do to resolve the problem at this stage?		
Are you attaching paperwork? If so please give details.		
Signature		Date
<i>For official use only</i>		
Date acknowledgement sent: By whom:		
Further action taken: Complaint referred to:		
Date:		