

## **Complaints Procedure: Swallow Grange Alternative Provision**

**Organisation:** Swallow Grange Alternative Provision **Address:** The Grange, Caistor Road, Swallow, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire LN7 6DP **Age Group Supported:** 4-11 year olds

**Specific Needs Supported:** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) / Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) **Policy Version:** 1.0 **Effective Date:** 8th July 2025

**Review Date:** 8th July 2026 (Annually, or sooner if there are significant changes or identified areas for improvement)

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### **1. Introduction**

At Swallow Grange Alternative Provision, we are committed to providing the highest quality education and care for all our pupils. We believe that strong, positive relationships with parents/carers and the wider community are fundamental to our success. We recognise that, occasionally, concerns or complaints may arise. This Complaints Procedure outlines a clear, fair, and accessible process for parents/carers and other stakeholders to raise concerns, ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and resolved promptly and effectively.

We understand that parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs may have specific anxieties or communication preferences. This procedure is designed to be sensitive and responsive to these needs.

### **2. Aims of this Policy**

- To provide a clear and transparent process for resolving complaints promptly and fairly.
- To ensure that all complaints are handled consistently, courteously, and with due respect for confidentiality.
- To encourage resolution at the earliest possible stage.
- To maintain and strengthen positive relationships between Swallow Grange and its stakeholders.
- To use complaints as an opportunity for continuous improvement in our provision and practices.
- To comply with relevant statutory guidance regarding school complaints procedures.

### 3. Scope of this Policy

This policy is for complaints from parents/carers or other individuals about any aspect of Swallow Grange Alternative Provision, its staff, or the services it provides.

#### This policy does NOT cover:

- **Complaints about a staff member's personal employment:** These are handled under the Staff Grievance Policy.
- **Concerns about a child's safety or welfare (safeguarding):** These must be reported immediately under the **Safeguarding Policy** and will be handled by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- **Whistleblowing concerns:** Serious allegations of malpractice or wrongdoing by staff members should be raised under the **Whistleblowing Policy**.
- **Exclusions:** These have separate statutory appeal processes.
- **Staff disciplinary matters:** These are internal HR processes.
- **Admissions decisions:** These are handled by the Local Authority (LA) or a separate appeals process.
- **Local Authority decisions regarding EHCPs:** These should be directed to the LA SEND team.

### 4. Principles of the Complaints Procedure

- **Fairness:** All complaints will be treated seriously, impartially, and with respect for all parties involved.
- **Confidentiality:** Information relating to a complaint will be shared only on a 'needtoknow' basis to facilitate investigation and resolution.
- **Resolution:** The aim is to resolve complaints at the lowest possible level and as quickly as possible.
- **Accessibility:** The procedure is designed to be accessible to all, with support for communication needs where required.
- **No Victimisation:** Individuals will not be treated unfavourably for making a genuine complaint in good faith.
- **Learning:** Complaints provide valuable feedback that can lead to improvements in our provision.

### 5. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

We encourage complaints to be resolved informally in the first instance.

#### Stage 1: Informal Resolution (Initial Concern)

Most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally through direct communication.

1. **Contact the Relevant Staff Member:** If you have a concern, please discuss it directly with the staff member most closely involved (e.g., your child's key worker, class teacher, or the specific member of staff relevant to your concern).

2. **Speak to a Senior Leader:** If you are not comfortable speaking directly to the staff member, or if the issue is not resolved, please contact the **Head of Provision**.
3. **Communication:** Concerns can be raised verbally, by phone, or by email.
4. **Response:** The staff member or Head of Provision will listen carefully, investigate the matter informally, and aim to resolve the concern within **5 working days**. A record of the concern and resolution may be made internally.

## **Stage 2: Formal Written Complaint to the Head of Provision**

If the concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or if you feel the matter is sufficiently serious to warrant a formal complaint, you should submit a written complaint.

1. **Submit in Writing:** The complaint must be submitted in writing to the **Head of Provision**. You may use a complaints form (available from reception) or write a letter/email.
2. **Content of Complaint:** The complaint should clearly state:
  - Your name and contact details.
  - The nature of the complaint, providing specific details, dates, and names of individuals involved.
  - What steps (if any) you have already taken to resolve the issue.
  - What outcome or resolution you are seeking.
  - Any supporting documentation.
3. **Acknowledgement:** The Head of Provision will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within **3 working days**.
4. **Investigation:** The Head of Provision will investigate the complaint thoroughly and impartially. This may involve:
  - Meeting with you to discuss the complaint in detail.
  - Interviewing relevant staff members or others involved.
  - Reviewing relevant documents or records.
5. **Response:** The Head of Provision will provide a written response to your complaint within **15 working days** of the acknowledgement. This response will:
  - Outline the findings of the investigation.
  - State the conclusions reached.
  - Explain any actions taken or proposed to resolve the complaint.
  - Inform you of your right to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 if you remain dissatisfied.
  - *If the Head of Provision is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be submitted directly to the Chair of Governors/Trustees (Stage 3).*

## **Stage 3: Formal Complaint to the Governing Body/Trustees**

If you are not satisfied with the Head of Provision's response at Stage 2, or if your complaint is directly about the Head of Provision, you may escalate your complaint to the Governing Body/Trustees.

1. **Submit in Writing:** You must submit your complaint in writing to the **Chair of Governors/Trustees** within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 response. You must state the grounds for your appeal/escalation and explain why you believe the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved.
2. **Acknowledgement:** The Chair of Governors/Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within **3 working days**.

3. **Complaints Panel:** The Chair of Governors/Trustees will arrange for a Complaints Panel to hear the complaint. This panel will consist of at least three impartial governors/trustees who have not had prior involvement in the complaint. An independent clerk will be appointed to take minutes.
4. **Panel Hearing:** A formal hearing will be arranged normally within **20 working days** of the acknowledgement.
  - You will be invited to attend the hearing to present your complaint. You may be accompanied by a friend or representative.
  - The Head of Provision (if applicable) and other relevant individuals may also be invited to present information.
  - The panel will hear evidence from all parties and ask questions.
5. **Panel Decision:** The Complaints Panel will consider all evidence presented and make a decision.
  - The Panel's decision will be communicated to you in writing within **5 working days** of the hearing.
  - The decision will be final within the provision's internal complaints procedure. It will explain the Panel's findings, conclusions, and any actions to be taken.
  - The letter will also advise you of your right to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) if you believe the provision has acted unreasonably or failed to follow its own procedure.

## 6. Managing Vexatious Complaints

Swallow Grange Alternative Provision is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, we reserve the right to manage complaints that are deemed 'vexatious', 'persistent', or 'abusive'. This means complaints that are obsessive, harassing, or aim to disrupt the provision rather than genuinely resolve an issue. In such cases, the Head of Provision or Chair of Governors/Trustees may take action, including:

- Limiting communication to a single point of contact.
- Requesting communication in a specific format.
- Refusing to respond to repeated complaints that have already been fully investigated.
- Informing the complainant that no further correspondence will be entered into.
- In extreme cases, seeking legal advice.

The complainant will be informed in writing if their complaint is deemed vexatious and what action will be taken.

## 7. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- All complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those who need to be involved in the investigation or resolution.
- Detailed records of all formal complaints, including correspondence, meeting minutes, investigation findings, and outcomes, will be kept securely by the Head of Provision or Clerk to Governors. These records will be separate from individual pupil or staff files.
- Records will be retained in accordance with the provision's Data Protection (GDPR) Policy and Retention Schedule.

## **8. Review of this Policy**

This Complaints Procedure will be reviewed annually by the Head of Provision and the Governing Body/Trustees. The review will consider:

- The effectiveness of the procedure in resolving complaints.
- The number and nature of complaints received.
- Feedback from complainants and staff involved.
- Any changes in statutory guidance or best practice.

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**Signed: Head of Provision – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026**

**Signed: Jayne Chudley – Managing Director – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026**