



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

At our centre , we always endeavour to provide high quality education whilst ensuring we build positive relationships with children, parents, community members and other stakeholders. In order to further enhance this relationship and to encourage continuous improvement we feel it essential that concerns and complaints are dealt with appropriately and effectively in a timely manner.

We strongly believe that it is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to any aspect of the centre, we encourage them to talk to their child's tutor immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class tutor they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class tutor. They **WILL** always be taken seriously.

### Aim

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible;
- Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly and within defined time limits where possible;
- Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints;
- Maintain good working relationships between the centre and all those involved;
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.

At each stage in the complaint procedure the centre will seek to look at ways how the complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again
- Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur
- An undertaking to review centre policy or procedure in light of the complaint
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern

Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared.

## **Procedure**

### Stage 1 (Informal): Complaint heard by staff member

Any parent who has a concern regarding their child's education should discuss the matter, in the first instance, with the child's class tutor. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary and agreed course of next steps to be taken.

There may be instances where the staff member may feel it appropriate to refer the matter to a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT). In this instance, they will inform the parent and the SMT member will deal with the complaint liaising with the class tutor as necessary and respond to within 5 days. If the response is unsatisfactory then the parent may wish to proceed to stage 2.

### Stage 2 (Formal): Complaint heard by centre Head.

If a parent feels their concern has not been addressed by the class tutor or member of the SMT, or that their concern is of a more serious nature, then they should make an appointment to see the Head of the Centre and forward details of the complaint in writing.

Parents will be informed of the outcome in writing within 10 working days of meeting the Centre Head.

The Head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

### Stage 3 (Formal): Complaint heard by Directors

If parents are not satisfied with the response from the Head or that the complaint is about the Head then they should write to the Directors to request that their complaint is considered further. The complaint must be made in writing stating the nature of the complaint and a summary of how the centre has handled it so far. This should be addressed to the 'Chair of Governors'. He/she will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing or by phone.

The complaint will be considered by a panel consisting of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member must be independent of the management and running of the centre. At this panel hearing the parent may be accompanied if they wish. Parents will be informed of the outcome in writing within 15 days of when the Directors acknowledges the complaint.

If the complaint is about the Directors then parents should write to the Proprietor.

### Stage 4 (Formal): Complaint heard by the Complaints Appeal Panel

If the complainant is still not satisfied after stage 3 then they can escalate the matter to the Complaints Appeal Panel who will hear the complaint. The panel will comprise of nominated members of the Trustees and will be chaired by the Chair, unless he / she has been involved in previous stages. In this instance, the Vice Chair or another nominated Director will chair.

The Appeals Panel is the last centre based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber stamp previous decisions. It is an impartial panel which does not consist of individuals who have had previous involvement in the process. Individual complaints will not be heard by all the Directors at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The decision will be communicated within 10 days.

## Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

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

The Chair of the Panel will notify the complainant of the panel's decision, in writing including the reasons for the decision. A deadline for this will be set at the hearing and communicated to the complainant. The letter will also explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

The copy of the decision and all matters relating to complaints will be also made available to the person complained about, if relevant and stored in the Complaints Folder so can be viewed by the Centre Head and Proprietor. In this folder, a record of all complaints that are made, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and action taken by the centre will be logged as a result of those complaints. All these findings will be kept confidential and stored in the Head's office and will be available on request from a regulatory body.

### General Principles

- No Director will sit on a panel if he/she has had prior involvement;
- We will attempt to ensure that the panel consists of a cross section of the categories of Directors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation;
- At any stage throughout the complaints process the parent may be accompanied or represented by a person of their choosing;
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the centre and the complainant;
- The panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible;
- The panel will equal consideration to the views of the child as they do to an adult;
- It must be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour.

If after the final decision, the complainant is still not satisfied, they can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education (DfE):

The Centre Complaints Unit (SCU):  
Department for Education  
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

## **Summary of the Complaints Process**

### **Stage 1** - Complaint heard by staff member

Ensure complaints coordinator informed of outcome.

If not resolved, then escalate to **Stage 2** – Complaint heard by Centre Head .

Acknowledge receipt of complaint;

Write to complainant with outcome of investigation within 10 working days of meeting the Head;

Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome;

Offer escalation to Stage 3 if dissatisfied.

If not resolved, then escalate to **Stage 3** - Complaint heard by Director.

Acknowledge receipt of complaint in writing or by phone;

Write to complainant with outcome of investigation within 15 days of when the Directors acknowledges the complaint;

Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome;

Offer escalation to Stage 4 if dissatisfied.

If not resolved, then escalate to **Stage 4** – Director’s complaints panel meeting arranged.

Issue letter inviting complainant to meeting;

Issue letter confirming panel decision as per the agreed timescales;

Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome.

Advise of escalation route to the Secretary of State for Education.