



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Date: 5th May 2016

Review period: Two years

This version: 28 June 2019 v05

Next review: January 2020

Responsibility: Principal

Availability: All parents on Website, Firefly, Paper copy in Principal's office.

Related policies:

Communication Policy; Persistent Complaints Policy; NAE Code of Conduct & Ethics

1. PURPOSE – OUR POLICY

1.1. Our policy and the related procedures aim to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that:

- 1.1.1. any complaint will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution;
- 1.1.2. the school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively can lead to improvements in school practice and provision for pupils;
- 1.1.3. decisions taken to resolve complaints will take account of the best interests of all concerned. The decisions on how best to run the school are the responsibility of the school's staff and, ultimately, the Principal, however.

2. SCOPE – WHO IS THIS POLICY FOR?

- 2.1. Complainants may be anyone with an interest in the work of the school (for example: parents; guardians; relatives; neighbours of the school). It is expected, however, that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of the complaints procedure and this document is written with them in mind.
- 2.2. The term 'parent' is therefore used throughout for readability, but the procedure also applies in relation to any other complainant.
- 2.3. Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in person or by letter.
- 2.4. A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work. It is different to a "concern" as defined in the Safeguarding Policy.

3. STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 3.1. There are three stages to the Complaints Procedure, one Informal Stage (Stage 1) and two subsequent Formal Stages (Stages 2 and 3).

- 3.2. The school's aim is to resolve complaints quickly and effectively with the most appropriate person in an informal manner at Stage 1. We recognise, however, that parents may wish to refer a matter further. This may still be done in an informal manner at the Informal Stage. The Formal Stages provide a further structured way for parents to do this if a parent feels the need.
- 3.3. There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him or her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed. (See also Persistent Complaints Policy.)
- 3.4. The timescales of each stage are set out below. To comply with ISI regulatory requirements, complaints about the delivery of the EYFS must be completed within 28 days (ISSR para 33©; EYFS 3.75, notes 476, 477, and E78)

4. TO WHOM SHOULD A COMPLAINT BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1. Unless of a particularly sensitive nature, complaints are best addressed to the person most closely connected with the matter. This usually means the Class Teacher (in Primary) or the Subject Teacher or Form Tutor (in Secondary).

5. INFORMAL STAGE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – Stage 1

- 5.1. In the first instance, a parent may raise a concern directly with the most relevant school staff member informally. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood a situation. In any event, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a timely and effective way.
- 5.2. If the concern is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, however, the opportunity will be provided to discuss the matter with an appropriate, more senior member of staff. The member of staff will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible.
- 5.3. In the case of complaint against a Head Teacher or Deputy Head, this stage will always be heard directly by the Principal.
- 5.4. Formal complaints against the Principal should be directed to Nord Anglia Education's Regional Managing Director.
- 5.5. The parent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and may be informed of what action, if any, the school proposes to take. Details of internal disciplinary action, or action taken with another child or family, if any, may not be provided to the complainant.

- 5.6. If this informal process has been exhausted and, in the opinion of the parent, no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint at the time whether (s)he wishes the complaint to be considered formally at Stage 2 of this procedure.
- 5.7. If so, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Head Teacher using the School Complaint Form attached to this policy as Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Head Teacher or, in the case of a complaint initially heard by or directed against the Head Teacher, to the Principal, within five school days.
- 5.8. If a Formal School Complaint Form is not submitted within five school days the school may assume that the complaint has been withdrawn.

5.9. Records of informal complaints

- 5.9.1. Written records of all correspondence, conversations and meetings with parents to resolve informal complaints that have been referred to a Head Teacher are kept.
- 5.9.2. Each Head Teacher (Primary; Secondary) keeps a file of paper copies of Informal Complaints referred to them.
- 5.9.3. This record is discussed with the Principal each term in order to monitor possible persistent or pervasive issues, or persistent complaints.

6. FORMAL STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – Stages 2 and 3

Stage 2: Referral for further investigation

- 6.1. Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at the Informal Stage, Stage 2 is referral to the Head Teacher as a written complaint or a request for a meeting.
 - 6.2. Where the complaint has been addressed by the Head Teacher at the Informal Stage, the next possible stage, Stage 2, is referral to the Principal, which remains at Stage 2.
 - 6.3. The Principal or Head Teacher will acknowledge the written complaint or request for a meeting within two school days of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet to discuss the complaint.
 - 6.4. The Principal or Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within five school days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised response date.
 - 6.5. The written response will include reasons for the conclusions reached by the Principal or Head Teacher and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter. Details of internal disciplinary action, or action taken with another child or family, if any, may not be provided to the complainant.
 - 6.6. If the parent remains dissatisfied, (s)he will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further, (s)he must notify the Principal in writing within five school days.
 - 6.7. The Principal will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to a Complaints Panel at Stage 3 or a further attempt at resolution by the Principal at Stage 2.
- 6.8. Records of formal complaints**
- 6.8.1. All complaints that reach Stage 2 are recorded in the Complaints Log which is kept by the Principal's Personal Assistant.
 - 6.8.2. Parents are entitled to request to see this Complaints Policy and the number of formal complaints logged in the previous academic year.

Stage 3: Review by a Complaints Panel

- 6.9. Complaints will only rarely reach this level. When the need arises, however, a Complaints Panel will consider complaints at this stage.
- 6.10. A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 3 will be sent to the parent by the Principal within two school days.
- 6.11. The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by a Complaints Panel within five school days of sending the acknowledgment. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the complaint form and that these must be made available to the Complaints Panel within three school days of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The complainant does not have the right to call witnesses to the meeting, although they may be accompanied by one companion of her/his choice.
- 6.12. The Principal will convene a Complaints Panel meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will then be confirmed no less than five school days in advance.
- 6.13. The names of all parties to attend the meeting and relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the Complaints Panel to the parent, the Principal and/or Head Teacher, and each panel member. This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least two school days prior to the meeting. Some items, such as video footage, will not be provided to the parent.
- 6.14. The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in Appendix 3.
- 6.15. A written decision will be sent to the parent and the Principal and/or Head Teacher by the Chair of the Complaints Panel within three school days of the meeting.
- 6.16. The letter will explain that the decision of the Complaints Panel is final and that there is no subsequent appeal process

Appendix 1

Stage 2: FORMAL SCHOOL COMPLAINT FORM and LOG

Date	
To whom or what does the issue relate? <i>Brief title for the complaint.</i>	
Complainant <i>Relationship to the school & contact details.</i>	Name: Relationship: Contact details: iSAMS/Other:
How was the complaint received?	Verbally in person / Email / Letter / Telephone call
Details of the complaint <i>Please be as specific and detailed as possible. Attach email or letter.</i>	
Proposed resolution. <i>What would you like to see done to resolve your complaint and bring the matter to an acceptable closure for yourself and the school?</i>	
Signed	
<p>Please return the completed form to the Principal or Head Teacher. Stage 2 Complaints must be sent on this form to the Principal's PA who will store these securely.</p>	

Appendix 2 Composition of the Complaints Panel

The Complaints Panel should consist of three members of the school. A Chair should also be appointed by the panel.

No member of the Complaints Panel should have had prior involvement with the complaint.

Normally, the Principal should be one member of the panel. If the Principal was involved at an earlier stage in the procedure s/he should not be included as a member of the panel. In this case an alternative member of the School Management Team or Educational Leadership Team should be a member of the panel.

The second and third member of the panel should be a Head Teacher and Deputy Head from a different section of the School (Primary / Secondary).

It is not considered appropriate for the Head Teacher of the section to which the complaint refers to be a member of the panel. The role of the Head Teacher would be to attend the panel meeting to give evidence.

Appendix 3 Complaints Panel - Procedures for Hearing the Complaint

Introduction

The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting proceedings and outcome are properly recorded in writing.

Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as comfortable as possible and that all parties are put at ease.

Order of Meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and his/her companion.
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent explains the complaint
4. The panel may question the parent.
5. The parent and companion leaves the meeting.
6. The Chair welcomes the Head Teacher (or the Principal where the complaint has been addressed by the Principal at Stage 2).
7. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
8. The Head Teacher or Principal presents a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at earlier stages of the procedure.
9. The panel may question the Head Teacher or Principal.
10. The Head Teacher or Principal leaves the meeting.
11. The parent, together with his/her companion, is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
12. The Head Teacher or the Principal is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
13. The Panel considers the complaint and reaches a majority decision. The panel also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and, if appropriate, recommends changes to ensure similar complaints are not made in future.
14. When a decision has been made, the Chair recalls the parent, then the Head Teacher and each is informed of the outcome and any action to be taken.
15. The decision of the Complaints Panel constitutes a judgement and there is no subsequent appeal procedure.
16. All outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties within three days.

Appendix 4 Complaints Procedure Summary

Whom to contact first

General academic or social concerns

Class Teacher (Primary)
Form Tutor (Secondary)

Subject specific concerns

Class Teacher (Primary)
Subject Teacher (Secondary)

These people will then help refer the matter to the right person if requested.

Flowchart summary

This summary does not replace the full Complaints Policy and Procedure, to which reference should be made.

