



## **Complaints Policy**

### **Rationale:**

At Central Street we strive to provide the best education for all our children. We work hard to build positive relationships with all families and to resolve issues quickly and informally as they arise. It is perfectly natural, occasionally, to have concerns over your child's life at school and we are required to have effective procedures in place to deal with complaints. At Central Street we take the views of families very seriously and have a commitment to raise the quality of education for all children.

### **Aims:**

- We will be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint.
- We will give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible.
- We will aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding.
- We will always put the interests of the child above all else.
- We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.
- We will use complaints received to inform work to meet our commitment to raising the quality of education for all.

### **Broad Guidelines:**

The quickest way to sort concerns out is to take the opportunity to talk to your child's teacher about them – the problem can often be solved on the spot. The school welcomes this as part of its day-to-day commitment to children and parents. This stage of the Complaints Policy is known as the Informal Stage.

### ***Informal Stage***

- Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss your concerns, to ensure a teacher is available to meet with you. Please have in mind an outcome which you are seeking to achieve to discuss with the teacher.
- Where problems cannot be sorted out "on the spot" they sometimes give rise to complaints, and this document is designed to help parents and the school resolve complaints. All schools, from 2016 onwards, have to have a document like this which sets out the schools' complaints policy.
- The quicker you bring your concern to the school's attention, the easier it will be to resolve. Normally, the school reserves the right not to consider issues not raised within three months of the issue arising. This will be reconsidered on a case-by-case basis under exceptional circumstances which may be considered by the Governing Body.
- The last page – the Appendix - of this document gives a table for "special cases", issues which are regulated by other parts of school life, and summarises how

such issues may be dealt with. It can help you to look at this table to check your concern or complaint is not covered by another part of school life.

Further stages of the Complaints Policy are available to complainants if the advice above does not resolve the complaint – they are listed below. These may be gone through in order, or out of order, if the complaint may be more easily resolved. For instance, if the complaint is about a teacher, the process might start with a letter to the Headteacher, or if the complaint is about the Headteacher, the process might start with a letter to the Chair of Governors. Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

### **Formal Stage**

- The Headteacher Stage of the Complaints Policy is when a letter outlining the complaint is sent to the Headteacher. If you need help in writing such a statement of complaint, please let the Headteacher know by a phone call. Please mark letters “Private and Confidential” to the Headteacher.
- The Governing Body Stage of the Complaints Policy is when a written statement of the complaint can be considered by either the Chair of Governors, or a panel of governors brought together, for example, if the complaint is against the Chair of Governors. A complaint letter can be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Body, via the school office. Please mark letters “Private and Confidential” to the Clerk of the Governing Body
- The intention will always be to resolve the complaint at the earliest stage possible. In general terms, if it was not possible to resolve the complaint at the Informal Stage, the school will try and resolve the complaint at the Headteacher Stage – if it is not possible to resolve the complaint at the Headteacher Stage, the Governing Body stage will apply.
- If the complainant still remains dissatisfied at the end of the school processes above, the complainant may do one of the following:
  - Write to the Local Authority – but note that the Local Authority will only investigate if the Complaints Policy has been followed, or
  - Write to the Schools’ Complaints Unit for the complaint to be investigated – this effectively refers the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by writing to:  
Department for Education, School Complaints Unit,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.
- The school will investigate your complaint, take evidence to look at what has happened and generally establish facts to arrive at conclusions to guide a

response to the person complaining. This may include any or all of the following:

- Meeting with you to clarify the complaint, or to explain aspects of the schools' operations or its policies
  - Interviews with staff and children, and keeping records of such interviews
  - Reviews of educational or other records kept
  - Maintaining records of any meetings to review the complaint, either with staff or the Governing Body.
- The Schools' staff and Governing Body will be guided by national statements of good practice in respect of all aspects of complaints investigation by the Appendix on Roles and Responsibilities in "Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016", for which a reference can be found on page 5.
  - The school will:
    - Acknowledge the complaint in writing to you within three working days, send you a copy of this procedure and a reference to national advice how to complain on <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school> - this will include a statement of apology that the complainant has found it necessary to complain
    - Investigate the complaint
    - Give you a full response signed off by the Headteacher, within a month, or keep you informed about the timescale that it will take to reach a finally-signed off reply if it is not possible to meet this timescale. For instance, while the school will seek to complete complaints investigations as soon as possible, use of the further stages outlined in 3.0 may take time to arrange as they many include further meetings and reviews of the facts.
    - Give you, if the complaint is considered by the Governing Board, a response signed-off by the Chair of Governors
  - The full response in iii) or iv) will outline to the complainant the next stage of the Policy or other options if the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome.
  - Staff involved will be also informed of the outcome of the complaint.
  - The Federation Governing Body takes the views of parents and children very seriously and has a commitment to raise the quality of education for the children it cares for in its schools. It will use complaints received to inform work to meet that commitment.
  - As part of that commitment to quality, the Governing Body will receive, in an anonymised form, information based on the outcome of complaints, to inform work required to raise the quality of education within the schools. It may also report back to parents and other stakeholders, again not identifying the complainant, on key issues raised by the complaint which affect the childrens' education. This may be in the form of a "you said – we did" commitment.

## **Conclusion**

This document is based on the document “Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016”, and best practice from other parts of public life, and has been agreed by the Governing Body. It is deliberately couched in the types of questions which parents might ask themselves for ease of parents’ use – and also kept as straightforward and as brief as possible for ease of use.

If this policy is not sufficient to meet the needs of a particular complaint, the school will look at “Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016” and follow the advice in it to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible.

The document “Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016” can be found at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/489056/Best\\_Practice\\_Advice\\_for\\_School\\_Complaints\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489056/Best_Practice_Advice_for_School_Complaints_2016.pdf)

**Written /amended: November 2016**

**Next review date: November 2019**

## Appendix: Issues outside the scope of the School Complaints Policy

The complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact/information to note
<p>School re-organisation proposals Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Admissions to schools</p>	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with Local Authority (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>
<p>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</p>	<p>Safeguarding referrals are under the remit of the LA's children's social care services and child protection procedures apply must refer any concerns they may have. Any response to a complaint about a safeguarding referral made by school staff will be limited to considering whether the appropriate action was taken at the time the referral was made on the information available at the time and in accordance with the safeguarding policy.</p>
<p>Exclusion of children from school</p>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p>
<p>Whistleblowing</p>	<p>Schools have an internal whistleblowing policy for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a> 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.</p>
<p>Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures</p>	<p>These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<p>Complaints about services provided by other educational providers who may use school premises or facilities.</p>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.</p>

<p>Serial and Persistent Complaints</p>	<p>There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. It is a poor use of schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.</p> <p>The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly. A school needs to be able to say yes to all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;</li> <li>• The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any); and</li> <li>• They are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.</li> </ul> <p>The case is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience - have they actually said as much in a letter, email or telephone call?</li> <li>• Their letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.</li> <li>• They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Physical or verbal aggression</p>	<p>On rare occasions, the unreasonable behaviour of a complainant can pose a threat to the school community. If this occurs, a warning letter to the complainant threatening to ban him or her from the premises may be considered to deter any abusive or aggressive behaviour. In the most extreme case, it may be necessary to impose an actual ban on the person – this case the school will seek legal advice on how to do this.</p>