

# Complaints Procedure



## **Guidance for Parents**

### **Principles**

- Each school within the TEACH Trust will attempt to resolve problems informally wherever possible. An effective response and appropriate redress should be provided swiftly and simply.
- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation complaints should be brought to the attention of the school/Trust as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances
- Vexatious/Unreasonable Complaints. There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open an issue the Chair of the Trust Board will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed. A policy for handling vexatious complaints is available.
- Complaints delivered to the school outside of term time will be deemed to have been received on the first day the school returns from its break.

### **Scope of this Complaints Procedure**

This policy covers all informal complaints/concerns and formal complaints, other than those set out below. It is for use by parents of pupils at one of the Trust schools or those who recently attended one of the schools. Consideration can be given to complaints made by parents of pupils who no longer attend one of the schools, provided the complaint is received within 3 months of the child ceasing attendance at the school.

Formal complaints in the following areas will be dealt with under the relevant procedures, some of which are statutory procedures

- Admission to schools
- Exclusion of pupils from schools
- Statutory assessment of Special Educational Need
- Schools Re-organisation proposals subject to statutory procedures
- Complaints against individual members of staff in relation to their behaviour or competence
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Complaints about services provided by other providers, such as contractors
- Complaints about the curriculum, including religious education and collective worship.



## **Stage One. Informal Concern/Complaint Class teacher/Year Leader.**

Any initial concern or complaint will be heard by your child's class teacher or Year leader.

Making contact. Ask or write **(appendix A)** to your child's class teacher or the Year group Leader requesting that you speak to them confidentially. This will alert them to the importance of the conversation. They will make contact with you within 7 days, or sooner if possible, in order to meet/talk with you privately. This meeting will be at a time that is mutually convenient.

Note. If you feel you would have difficulty speaking to either the class teacher or Year Leader then please make an appointment via the school secretary to speak to the Deputy. Speaking to the Deputy does not automatically mean the complaints procedure has moved to stage 2.

At the meeting the member of staff will make a brief note of the conversation so that important information/details will not be forgotten. You may receive a response at the meeting that will re-assure and remedy your concern/complaint. If this is not the case then the teacher or Year leader will arrange to meet with you again within the next 7 to 10 days. This will allow them to pursue/investigate the matter and seek to resolve it. Additional meetings may be required.

## **Stage Two. Informal Concern/Complaint. Deputy Headteacher**

You are dissatisfied with the way your concern or complaint has been handled by the classteacher or Year leader. The matter needs referral to the Deputy. **Appendix AB.**

Ask the school secretary for an appointment with the Deputy Head/Assistant Head. An appointment should be arranged within 7 days. The Deputy will meet with you privately. This meeting will be at a time that is mutually convenient.

At the meeting the Deputy will make a brief note of the conversation so that important information/details will not be forgotten. You may receive a response at the meeting that will re-assure and remedy your concern/complaint. If this is not the case then the Deputy will arrange to meet with you again within the next 7 to 10 days. This will allow them to pursue/investigate the matter and seek to resolve it. Additional meetings may be required.

## **Stage Three. Informal Concern/Complaint. Head of School**

You are dissatisfied with the way your concern or complaint has been handled by the Deputy. The matter needs referral to the Head of School. **Appendix B.**

Ask the school secretary for an appointment with the Head of School. An appointment should be arranged within 7 days. The HOS will meet you privately. This meeting will be at a time that is mutually convenient.

At the meeting the HOS will make a brief note of the conversation so that important information/details will not be forgotten. You may receive a response at the meeting that will re-assure and remedy your concern/complaint. If this is not the case then the HOS will arrange to meet with you again within the next 7 to 10 days. This will allow them to pursue/investigate the matter and seek to resolve it. Additional meetings may be required.

## **Stage Four. Formal Complaint to the Executive Head/CEO**



You are dissatisfied with the way your concern or complaint has been handled by the Head of School. The matter now needs to be managed under the Formal Complaints Procedure. **Appendix BB**

**Complete appendix BB** (Formal Complaint Form) giving full details of your complaint etc. Return this form to the school office marked 'EHT/CEO, TEACH Trust, Confidential'. The school secretary will ensure the complaint is forwarded to the Trust Executive Headteacher/Chief Executive Officer. The EHT/CEO will liaise directly with yourself and they should contact you within the next 14 days.

### **Stage 5. Formal Complaint to the Trust Board**

You are dissatisfied with the way your concern or complaint has been handled by the EHT/CEO of the Trust.

**Submit appendix C** (Formal Complaint Form) giving full details of your complaint etc. Return this form to the school office marked 'Chair of the Trust Board, Confidential'. The school secretary will ensure the complaint is forwarded to the Chair. The Chair, via the Clerk to the Trust Board, will liaise directly with yourself and they should contact you within the next 14 days.

This will allow time to convene a Trust Complaints panel and notify you of the date and time. This time frame may extend longer if convening a panel proves difficult but the Clerk will keep you informed. The panel will be convened at a mutually convenient time for both you and the Trustees.

The Trust Complaints/appeals panel usually consists of at least 2 Trustees.

### **Panel Meeting**

The panel meeting will follow the guidance issued by the Department for Education. You will be advised of this procedure in advance. When the meeting date has been agreed between the complainant and panel it is important that the date is kept. In only exceptional circumstances will a complaints meeting be cancelled. The Clerk will arrange for notes/minutes to be taken of the meeting. The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the panel meeting within 10 days working days and will be notified of their right to appeal against any decision made.

Following any hearing the nominated Trustees have responsibility for deciding whether there should be any recommendations on school policy as a result of any complaint.

### **Stage Six. Appeal**

If a parent decides to appeal against a Complaints panel decision then this must be made in writing, detailing reasons for the appeal and sent to the Chair of the Trust Board, via the Clerk marked 'Complaint Appeal'. Parents will be advised of the Appeal process at the conclusion of any Formal Complaint. The school should receive any appeal within 10 working days of the parent receiving the written outcome of the Complaints panel.

The appeal panel meeting will follow the guidance issued by the Department for Education. When an appeal meeting date has been agreed between complainant and Trustees it is important that the date is kept. In only exceptional circumstances will an appeal meeting be cancelled. The Clerk will arrange for minutes to be taken of the meeting. The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal meeting within the next 10 working days.

The Trustees appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. The decision



of the appeal panel is final.

Following any hearing the nominated Trustees have responsibility for deciding whether there should be any recommendations on school policy as a result of any complaint.

**V. Arbon. CEO. Teach Trust. September 2017**

### **Referral to the Secretary of State for Education**

Section 496 of the 1996 Act allows for a person to complain to the Secretary of State if they feel that a Governing Body/Trust Board has acted, or is proposing to act, unreasonably with respect to the power conferred or duty imposed by that Act. Such a complaint is unlikely to be successful where a school can show that it has acted reasonably in seeking to resolve a complaint and has used a fair procedure.

### **Withdrawal of Complaint**

The complainant may ask for his/her complaint to be withdrawn at any stage of the formal process and this will be acknowledged in writing.

