

Plumtree School Complaints Procedure

The School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School promptly in accordance with this Procedure.

Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7, paragraph 25 (a) to (k) inclusive, The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended 2013 and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) regulations.

Applies to:

- the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the out of school care and extra-curricular activities inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching and support staff), the proprietors and volunteers working in the school

Timescale

- The process of dealing with a complaint about the EYFS in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty-eight school-working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution. For the rest of the school, the process will take no more than twenty-eight school-working days during school term when the school is in session.
- A school working-day is between 8.30am and 4pm.

Availability

- The Complaints Procedure is provided in the information for prospective pupils, parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.
- This procedure is also made available to parents, in the School Prospectus, and on the School website: and It is also made available to parents or guardians of pupils on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail: plumtreepost@yahoo.co.uk

Monitoring and Review:

- The Head Teacher logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- The Proprietors monitor the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year and carry out a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure for the purposes of monitoring.
- This is reviewed regularly by the Head Teacher, along with a formal annual review by the Proprietors for the purposes of monitoring.

Signed:

Date: April 2024

Phil Simpson
Head Teacher

Introduction

This policy is made available to parents, staff and pupils on the School website, in the Parent Handbook and in the School Prospectus. It is also made available to parents of pupils on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail. The existence of the policy is clearly identified in the information provided for prospective pupils and parents. Plumtree School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of pupils at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a pupil at the school, parents or guardians of a pupil at the school or several parents or guardians of pupils at the school. This procedure encompasses the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. Parents have a right to make a complaint to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Details of how this may be done are given at the end of this procedure.

A complaint may be made by parents, pupils or staff. The School also has a 'whistle blowing policy' that is detailed in the staff handbook.

Plumtree School aims to be fair, open and honest by giving careful consideration to all complaints, dealing with them as swiftly as possible. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable time-frame. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation, but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. We aim to resolve any complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. Pupils will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We actively encourage strong home-school links and ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents. We also ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint.

Where the person being complained about is named as the person who would be handling the complaint in these procedures, their role will be passed upwards to their line manager. For example, teacher to deputy Head Teacher or deputy Head Teacher to Head Teacher, Head Teacher to all the proprietors.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should contact their child's Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or Head Teacher.
- Complaints made directly to the Head Teacher will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The School will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved swiftly within 5 school-working days or in the event that the Class Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution

then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, within five school-working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out additional investigations allowing a further period of up to 5-school working days before a final decision is made.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These will be kept for three years.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so as far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to stage 3 of this Procedure, unless the parent indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. A Panel Hearing would still be organised and proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. The Panel would consider the complaint and bring the matter to a conclusion.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to evoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Mrs S Blakeway, who has been appointed by the School to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters dealing with the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the proprietor. Mrs S Blakeway, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 school-working days during school term when the school is in session.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties no later than 5 school-working days during school term when the school is in session prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5-school working days during school term when the school is in session. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head and where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents of children Early Years Funding (3 & 4 yr olds) also have the option of contacting OFSTED when registering a complaint. (www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Confidentiality

Parents and guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaint Made Directly by Pupil

All children are reassured that we a 'talking' school and all children's complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly by the most suitable member of staff. Complaints can be made by going to the Head Teacher's office, or when absent, to a member of SLT.

Record keeping for the Whole School, including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing is kept by the Head Teacher, for a minimum of seven years if they do not have a safeguarding angle. Where there is a safeguarding angle, see records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Proprietors examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to ISI/Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. Parents may contact the Head Teacher to ask for the number of formal complaints made during the previous academic year.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Head Teacher (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Complaints from External Bodies

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the school's expectations.

Monitoring and Review

- The Head Teacher logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved.
- The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- This is reviewed regularly by the Head Teacher and Proprietors of the School for the purposes of monitoring.

Policy for Dealing with Complaints from Staff

- Plumtree School aims to be a listening and responsive school. We encourage staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones, which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints, will be resolved quickly and informally.
- All staff who have any complaint or cause for concern should speak to their line manager in the first instance. If this is not appropriate they should bring the matter to the attention of one of the Senior Leadership Team.
- A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and major complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.

- All complaints will be investigated within fourteen days and a formal letter will always be written as 'closure', indicating how the issue has been dealt with and what the outcome is.
- When a member of staff is dissatisfied with the outcome and has discussed this with the Head Teacher, the matter should be referred to the other Proprietors. In the case of a contractual employment grievance, the procedures outline in staff contracts of employment should be followed.

In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to Ofsted should they wish to, the relevant contact details are:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Helpline: 03001 123 123
Telephone: 03001 234 234 Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London. EC1A 9HA
Telephone: 0207 600 0100 Web: www.isi.net Email: info@isi.net