



BACKGROUND

The intention of this procedure is to provide a clear and transparent process that will enable complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately.

The procedure has been developed in accordance with guidance issued by the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency and satisfies the requirements of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010).

All references to working days refer to days on which the School is open to students and for staff training days.

SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

This procedure covers complaints received from parents, carers of pupils and other third parties.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the School or a member of its staff that requires a response from the School.

The procedure will not apply where there is an alternative School policy or procedure relevant to the issues raised. It will also not apply to complaints regarding admissions and exclusions, some safeguarding issues, the provision of collective worship and religious education and SEND assessments.

Where complainants make allegations regarding members of staff this procedure may be stayed pending consideration of the issues under appropriate staffing procedures.

This procedure does not apply to complaints raised by employees of the School in connection with their employment. Any such complaints should be raised with the Head Teacher or HR department of CMAT.

INTRODUCTION

Castle Primary School believes in Developing Learning for Life and are committed to meeting the needs of parents, carers of pupils and members of the community. However, there may be times when complaints arise in relation to the School and this document sets out the procedure the School will follow in handling complaints.

All complaints will be treated seriously and in an open and fair way.

At all times the School will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.

There may be occasions when the person dealing with a complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the School needs to know about the complaint or whether the consent of a third party is required, so as to address it appropriately.

Complaints that are made anonymously will be handled at the discretion of the School and may be considered using other procedures, depending on the nature of the complaint. For example, anonymous complaints relating to (or appearing to relate to) a child protection matter or alleged criminal activity may be referred immediately to the relevant authorities.

The School will keep a written record of all complaints, including the date on which they were received, the steps taken in relation to them, any documents used or created when considering the complaint and details of any outcomes.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- The Class Teacher is always the first point of contact. If a parent/carer has a complaint then they should contact their son/daughter's Class Teacher to discuss the matter. In many cases, the matter can be resolved straightaway by this means.
- If parents/carers have a complaint that cannot be resolved by the Class Teacher, then the parents/carers should contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days of the complaint being received by the School then parents/carers will be advised of their right to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. If this is not possible, we will advise the complainant of the revised timescale and any reason(s) for this.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The complaint will be dealt with by the Head Teacher or by a member of staff appointed by the Head Teacher.
- If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors, addressed to the School. The complaint will then be dealt with by a member of staff appointed by the Chair of Governors.
- In most cases the Head Teacher or the appointed member of staff, will speak to the parents/carers concerned, normally within 7 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 Teacher or the appointed member of staff, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Teacher or the appointed member of staff, will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Teacher or the appointed member of staff, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Teacher or the appointed member of staff, will give reasons for the decision and advise the parents/carers of their right to proceed with their complaint to Stage 3 of this procedure if they are not satisfied with the decision.
- If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Local Governing Body (LGB) - Panel Hearing

- If the parents/carers wish to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should refer their complaint to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body (LGB) who will call a hearing of the LGB Governors Complaints Panel. Parents/carers should write to the Clerk of the LGB within 7 days of receiving the Head Teacher's decision.
- The Panel will consist of at least three Governors from the LGB, who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and a person independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk of the LGB will appoint each Panel member and acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require further particulars of the complaint or related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person - this may be a relative or friend. Parents may not be accompanied by a lawyer nor by an employee of the School or by a parent or carer of a pupil of the School.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/carers' 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 7 days of the hearing.
- The Panel will write to the parents/carers informing them of the decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and, if any, the recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head Teacher and, where relevant, to the person at whom the complaint was directed.
- If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they can request a review of the Local Governing Body (LGB) Panel's procedures and should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 4 of this procedure.

Stage 4 – Congleton Multi Academy Trust (CMAT) - Process Review Panel Hearing

- If the parents/carers wish to proceed to Stage 4 (following their dissatisfaction with the procedures followed in Stage 3) they should refer their complaint to the Clerk of the Congleton Multi Academy Trust (CMAT) who will call a hearing of the CMAT Process Review Panel. Parents/carers should write to the Clerk of the CMAT within 7 days of receiving the LGB's decision, outlining the reasons why they believe the procedures followed by the Local Governing Body's Panel Hearing in respect to their complaint were flawed.
- The Process Review Panel will consist of 4 members, the Chair, who will be a CMAT Director who is not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and two Governors, selected by the Clerk from academies within the CMAT but not from an academy directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and a person independent of the management and running of CMAT. The Clerk of the CMAT will appoint each Panel member and acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable.
- If the Review Panel deems it necessary, it may require further particulars of the complaint or related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person - this may be a relative or friend. Parents may not be accompanied by a lawyer nor an employee of the School or by a parent or carer of a pupil of the School.
- The Process Review Panel has power to request that the LGB reconsider its decision. It has no power to overrule the decision of the LGB.

The panel may:

- a) dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- b) uphold the complaint in whole or in part;

- The Process Review Panel will write to the parents/carers informing them of the decision and the reasons for it within 14 days of the hearing. If this is not possible, we will advise the complainant of the revised timescale and any reason(s) for this.
- The decision of the Review Panel will be final and there will be no further right of appeal. The Panel's findings and, if any, the recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Local Governing Body, the Principal and, where relevant, to the person at whom the complaint was directed.

If parents/carers have been through all the stages of Congleton Multi Academy Trust's complaints procedure but remain dissatisfied, they can ask the Education Funding Agency to review the handling of their complaint. Parents/carers may contact the Education Funding Agency by:

- accessing the complaints about academies page on the Department for Education website
- e-mailing academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk
- writing to Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints), Education Funding Agency, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH
- telephoning the Department for Education's Public Communications Unit on 0370 000

