



Complaints Procedure

1. General Principles

The CSIA Trust works hard to provide a good service to, and have a good relationship with, students, parents/carers and members of the local community. However it is recognized that from time to time an individual or group may want to make a complaint to the Trust or its school(s) and it is incumbent upon the Trust to treat such complaints seriously, carrying out an investigation and reporting back within a reasonable time frame.

The Trust has adopted this procedure for complaints from people who are parents/carers of students attending any Trust academy at the time the complaint is made, or from people who are accessing the services of the Trust at the time the complaint is made. The Trust will usually also follow this procedure when dealing with complaints from others, but reserves the right to substitute this procedure for an alternative process where it is appropriate to do so. Complainants will be informed about the procedure that will be used to consider their complaint as soon as possible after their complaint is received by the Trust or academy.

This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the following, which are dealt with under separate policies:

- Staff Grievances or Disciplinary Procedures
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Issues Related to Child Protection
- Statements of SEND/EHC Plans

All staff will be made aware of this complaints procedure and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with the Trust's process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

2. Policy Statement

Stage 1 – Informal Procedures

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. In many cases, a concern can be resolved quickly and will not reach the stage of becoming a formal complaint. In most cases an individual member of staff will receive the first approach. The member of staff will make clear the Trust's response to the concerns raised and may agree certain actions to help resolve the complaint. Should the matter not be resolved informally, or where parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint raised informally, parents may choose to take the matter to the formal complaints stage.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

- Where a parent/carer has a significant concern the facts concerning this matter should be brought to the attention of an appropriate member of staff in writing, or at a pre-arranged meeting without delay.
- On receipt of the complaint the member of staff should seek to respond promptly according to the nature of the incident.
- If the parent has discussed the issue with the direct line manager and the complaint is unresolved, the parent should be advised of their right of complaint to the line manager on the Senior Leadership Team. The response to the complaint should be received within 5 working days and where possible sooner. (Note for the purposes of this procedure “working days” excludes weekends, bank holidays and academy holidays).
- If the complaint cannot then be resolved the parent should be advised to lodge their complaint in writing with the Principal. Once again a response to the complainant acknowledging the complaint should be received within 5 working days. If the complaint is about the Principal the Chair of Governors will act in this capacity.
- The Principal will investigate the complaint and will advise the complainant of the outcome within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint. If for any reason the Principal is unable to provide an outcome to the complaint within this timescale the complainant will be notified of the delay and given an indication of a timescale for response.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If the complaint still cannot be resolved, the parent will be advised of their right to have their complaint heard by a panel consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The school will convene a panel where one of the members will be independent of the management and running of the school and where appropriate one panel member to be either Chair of Governors or Chair of Trustees. The panel will be convened within 10 working days of the request for panel hearing from the parent. Parents will be entitled to attend and to be accompanied at the panel hearing if they so wish.
- Once the Panel has reached a decision the Panel Chair will inform all parties of the decision within 5 working days. At this point it should be made clear that the complaints procedure has been exhausted. If for any reason the Trust is unable to provide an outcome to the complaint within this timescale the complainant will be notified of the delay and given an indication of a timescale for response.
- The panel is required to provide a copy of their findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and to make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher

3. Complaints about the Principal, Executive Principal, Governors or Trustees

The Chair of Governors, in liaison with the Chair of Trustees, will normally hear complaints about the Principal. The Chair of Trustees will hear complaints about the Executive Principal.

Complaints against the Chair of Governors, Chair of Trustees, or any individual member of either the Local Governing Board or the Board of Trustees should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Trustees and the Governing Body c/o The CSIA Trust, Camborne Science & International Academy, Cranberry Road, Camborne, TR14 7PP whereupon at Stage 2 a panel of three to five governors/trustees (not previously involved) will hear the complaint. Their decision will be final.

4. Other notes

- Occasionally, pupils may wish to lodge a complaint and this should be directed to their Director of Key Stage/Pastoral Support Worker who will investigate and seek to find a resolution, documenting findings and communicating with the parents/carers and staff in school as necessary. Where a matter is deemed to be more serious the Director of Key Stage must refer to a member of The Senior Leadership Team.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of The CSIA Trust (for MAT/Trust complaints) or to the individual academy, as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered. However, the Trust may make exceptions to this.
- If the complaint concerns a child protection issue, the policy for child protection should take precedence

5. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

A written record is to be kept of all formal complaints, including:

- Whether they were resolved at stage 2 or progressed to a stage 3 panel hearing
- What action was taken by the Trust as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether the complaints were upheld)

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints must be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them.

6. Behaviour of Complainants and Dealing with Persistent or Serial Complaints

There are rare circumstances where the Trust will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out above. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour towards staff, members of the Governing or Trust Board is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive or threatening;
- where, because of the frequency of their contact with the Trust/academy, the complainant is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints and/or the proper running of the Trust/academy;
- where the complainant's complaint is vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds;
- where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts as a complaint which has already been considered in full by the Trust/academy.

In these circumstances, we may:

- inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- restrict the complainant's access to the Trust/academy, e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the academy's premises;
- conduct the Panel on the papers only i.e. hold a hearing where the complainant is not in attendance.

- refuse to consider the complaint and refer the complainant directly to the EFA.

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, members of the Governing Body or Trust Board, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

7. Referral to the Education Funding Agency (EFA)

- Should no resolution be found, parents/carers should be advised of their right to contact the Education Funding Agency.
- The EFA have limited powers to review the Trust's handling of the complaint in accordance with the EFA's 'Procedure for dealing with complaints about Academies'. At the time of writing this procedure, the EFA procedure and the EFA school complaints form are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy>

8. Aims

- To foster good working relationships with parents where they understand that their viewpoint is respected by the school
- To ensure that the parents' right of complaint is upheld and treated seriously by the school.

Date Approved by Governors – July 2017

Next Review – July 2020