



# Complaints Policy

## Centre Academy East Anglia

To be reviewed annually. Next review date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018

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*Centre Academy East Anglia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.*

Note: This Complaints Policy is available to download on the website. It is not necessary to contact the school.

Parents of pupils at CAEA are automatically sent a copy of the complaints procedure upon enrolment of their child.

Centre Academy East Anglia, like all schools in Suffolk, is committed to providing the best education for our students, whom we want to be happy, healthy and above all, safe. We are, however, aware that there may be occasions when people have complaints. The following Policy sets out exactly how any concern or complaint is addressed by the school. In this regard, it is important to note that school governing bodies are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints. Moreover, as an Independent School, we are required under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 to adopt, make available and apply the complaints procedure so that we comply with the Standards against which Ofsted/ISI inspections will be carried out.

There are two key persons involved in all aspects of the complaints procedure:

- CEO - Dr Duncan Rollo, Centre Academy, 92 St Johns Hill, Battersea, London. SW11 1SH  
Tel No: 020 77382344
- Head of School – Mrs Kim Salthouse, Centre Academy East Anglia, Church Road, Brettenham, Ipswich, Suffolk.  
Tel No: 01449 736404

Complaints are not defined in the Independent School Standards Regulations, but there is a substantial body of guidance, including that for Maintained Schools, suggesting that complaints should or can be subject to a formal procedure. However, it is hoped that most complaints, much like concerns, will be resolved quickly and informally, regardless of whether they come from parents, pupils or others. (Please note that this policy does not cover complaints from members of staff, as these are covered by the School's grievance and dispute procedures.)

Types of Concerns and Complaints: the majority of concerns/complaints received by schools fall into the following categories:

- academic: (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, progress in a particular subject etc.
- pastoral care: (discipline, sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of the child, accommodation etc.)
- child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues etc.)

CAEA has appointed a member of staff as Complaints Coordinator who will liaise closely with the Head of School.

## Responsibilities

### CEO

Responsible for:

- adopting the policy, procedures and guidelines;

- appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints, when complainants are not satisfied with the school's response;
- receiving reports and findings from the panel; or
- receiving reports from the Head of School; advising the Head of School.

The CEO will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly. The CEO will also monitor the school's response to complaints and any panel recommendations. The CEO will appoint a panel of at least three people independent of the management of the school to hear complaints from complainants not satisfied with the school's response.

### **Chair of the independent Panel**

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties; and
- findings are communicated to the complainant and school within three days of the hearing.

### **The School's Secretary**

The secretary must act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the school's response.

The secretary must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record the proceedings; and
- notify the parties of the decision.

Responsible for: administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints.

### **Head of School**

Responsible for:

- the overall internal management of the procedures;
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request;
- hearing complaints at the second stage (or appointing a Complaints Co-ordinator to hear them) (*see below*); and
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the CEO;
- dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.
- receiving any child protection issues or allegations against staff.

If any complaint is made against the Head of School, it should be referred directly to the CEO and if a complaint is against the CEO it should be referred directly to the Proprietor. (For more details please see the '*Managing Allegations*')

## **Complaints Co-ordinator**

Responsible for:

- the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints;
- keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedure; and
- compiling reports for the Head of School as required.

**Class Tutor:** for dealing with and where possible resolving concerns/complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.

**All staff:** for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils, and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff; and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns (Complaints Coordinator); and for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Head of School.

## **Procedures**

### **General**

There are three possible stages:

#### Stage 1 Informal Resolution

Concerns expressed by parents or pupils to any member of staff should be dealt with by that member of staff if he/she is able to do so. If the member of staff considers the issue to be beyond his/her competence the concern should be passed to the Complaints Co-ordinator.

If a student has what they deem to be a serious complaint they will request a Complaints Form from a member of staff. All staff have access to the forms. Once these are completed, either with or without guidance from another member of staff the form will be given to the Head of School or Principal who will then carry out a full investigation of the student/young person's complaint.

Concerns/complaints which come to a member of staff from other sources should be passed immediately to the Head of School, who will inform the complainant of the action he/she proposes to take.

#### Stage 2 Formal Procedure

Complaint heard by Head of School

#### Stage 3 Independent Panel Hearing

Complaint heard by the independent panel appointed by the CEO.

## **Detailed Guidance**

All staff should be conversant with the procedures.

### **Stage 1**

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' and pupils' complaints, recognising that however ill-founded the complaint might be it is a matter of great concern to the parent or pupil.

- 1.1 If a parent or pupil is concerned about anything to do with the education at Centre Academy East Anglia, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way.
- 1.2 Where a parent or pupil feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Complaints Co-ordinator. The Complaints Co-ordinator considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are resolved at this stage.
- 1.3 If a parent or pupil is concerned about anything to do with the pastoral care or boarding at Centre Academy East Anglia, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Head of School. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way.
- 1.4 Where a parent or pupil feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the Complaints Co-ordinator, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Head of School. The Head of School considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly.

### **24-hour service**

If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly this should be done. Otherwise the complainant should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and the relevant person should be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible. The complainant should be told that it is the school's policy to respond to the verbal complaint within 24 hours, even if the issue cannot be entirely resolved in 24 hours.

If a trivial/simple verbal concern/complaint is made it might be possible to resolve it immediately. In more serious cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing (and moving to Stage 2 Formal Procedure). This is to ensure that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by the members of the school staff.

### **Serious complaint by a pupil**

If a serious complaint is made by a pupil, the member of staff should immediately inform the Complaints Co-ordinator/Head of School who will discuss the issue with

the relevant members of staff in order to determine what the course of action should be.

If the complaint concerns a safeguarding issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff, the designated DSL (see Safeguarding policy) should be informed immediately

If the senior member of staff considers the issue to be serious, he/she should inform the Head of School via the school's 'Complaints Form', and inform the complainant of the action taken. If the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, he/she should be informed that they must make a formal complaint in writing to the CEO (directly to the CEO if the complaint is about the Head of School).

In any cases of doubt members of staff should seek the advice of the Complaints Co-ordinator who has the responsibility for mentoring colleagues. Informal resolution should take no more than **three** working days. If a longer period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant should be informed, within three days, of the reasons, and the new date for resolution.

## **Stage 2**

When a written formal complaint is received, the Head of School must consult the relevant staff, make appropriate investigations, and resolve the issue within **three** working days. If a resolution cannot be found, the Head of School should inform the complainant of his/her right of appeal to an independent panel. (This step also applies to complaints from pupils/young people who have completed a complaints form.)

No complaint should be left unresolved at this stage: **THREE** days of receipt of the complaint. Where more time is necessary to complete the investigations, the complainant will be informed and another date set.

## **Stage 3**

### **Hearings by an Independent Panel**

Complainants who are not satisfied by the school's decision re: the complaint can request a hearing by a panel of three members independent of the school management.

The complainant must be advised by the Head of School to write to the CEO, giving details of the complaint. The CEO will nominate the panel.

The panel will consist of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school.

The hearing must be within 10 days of the CEO receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of his/her right to be accompanied at the panel hearing. The Secretary in consultation with the parties, must arrange relevant translations/interpreters.

The nominated panel will make its own procedures, and will agree these with the CEO.

The panel will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible is put at ease.

Careful consideration must be taken when the complainant is a pupil.

The panel will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome.

The panel can make such findings and recommendations to the CEO as it wishes. It must send its report to the CEO, the Head of School and (where relevant) the complainant within three working days of the hearing.

## **CEO Action**

The CEO, after consultation with the Head of School, will consider the panel's findings and recommendations. After which one of the following courses of action will be taken:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or part;
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint; or
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures.

Where there is provision for an extra appeal to another body in the school's policy, the terms of that provision must be strictly adhered to.

The CEO's decision will be communicated to the parties within THREE days of receiving the panel's report.

Complaints will all be settled within 28 working days of the original complaint.

## **Complainants Rights**

We believe that any complainant and anyone else involved in the complaint should be fully satisfied that the panel's findings and recommendations are entirely transparent. Accordingly, CAEA will provide a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head of School, and we will ensure that a written record is kept of all written complaints that have been made in instances when the parent is not satisfied with the original response to the complaint. CAEA will also record whether complaints are resolved following a formal procedure or have been addressed via a panel hearing, and it will be specified as to what action has been taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether or not the complaint has been upheld. Finally, the school will ensure that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential (except where the Secretary of State of a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them).



## **Governance**

In cases when intervention by the school has not been successful or if a complaint is to be lodged against the Head of School or the CEO, the parent may request the intercession of the CEO.

The CEO (Chief Executive Officer of the Centre Academy Schools) is Dr Duncan Rollo. Dr Rollo's contact and other details are to be found on the school website. A complaint directed to the CEO will, in the first instance, be given acknowledgement of receipt of complaint which should specify the expected response time. The CEO will subsequently communicate directly with the parent/guardian at the earliest opportunity. The CEO may suggest mediation through another party. If at this stage there is no satisfactory resolution, the CEO will arrange an independent review hearing. Within the framework of a review, parents may attend the hearing and should they so desire, they may be accompanied. Following deliberation, the CEO may make specific findings and recommendations. These will be made available to the complainant, the proprietor, the CEO and the Head of School; when relevant, the person against whom the complaint is directed may also be given a copy of the findings and recommendations.

## **Reporting and Recording**

**In all cases** it is important for staff to use the school's 'Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form.

The Secretary will ensure that all correspondence, statements and records pertaining to the complaint are kept confidential and secure except where the inspecting body requests access to them.

The Complaints Co-ordinator will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Head of School will report to staff from time to time on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes. A complaint register will be kept by the Head of School for reporting purposes.



This Policy should be read alongside the following:

- the school development plan
- the safeguarding policy
- the managing allegations policy
- the behaviour and discipline policy
- the suspension/exclusion policy
- the attendance policy
- the confidentiality policy
- the anti-bullying policy
- the Centre Academy East Anglia Handbook, Boarding Handbook and Prospectus.

Signed:



Date: 01/02/17

CEO

Dr Rollo

Signed:



Date: 01/02/17

Head of School

Mrs Salthouse

## CENTRE ACADEMY EAST ANGLIA

### INFORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM

Complainant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Complaint

Desired outcome

Outcome of Investigation of Complaint

Date outcome communicated to complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of complaint investigator \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be completed as soon as possible after the investigation is complete and handed to the Head of School for inclusion in the Complaints Log.