





Complaints Policy

Signed	
Position	Chair of Proprietor Body
Signed	
Position	Head of School
Date Agreed	16 th September 2023
Next Review	16 th September 2024

Equality Statement

Centre Academy London is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability or religious belief. We provide a safe, supportive and welcoming environment.

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

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1. Introduction

The number of formal complaints Centre Academy London received in 2022-2023 was: one complaint.

Note: This Complaints Policy is available to download on the website. It is not necessary to contact the school. Parents of pupils at Centre Academy London (CAL) are automatically sent a copy upon enrolment of their child.

CAL 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 required by Ofsted/ISI inspections.

There are three key persons involved in all aspects of the complaint's procedure:

- **SENDCo / Complaints Coordinator-** Ms Maria Palamartsuk, Centre Academy London, 92 St John's Hill, Battersea, London, SW11 1SH
Tel No: 020 7738 2344
- **Head of School** – Ms Kas Lee-Douglas, Centre Academy London, 92 St John's Hill, Battersea, London, SW11 1SH
Tel No: 020 7738 2344
- **Proprietor** – Mr Rohan Murphy, Centre Academy London, 92 St John's Hill, Battersea, London. SW11 1SH
Tel No: 07793 563 281

2. Aims

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial.
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response.
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law.
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process.

- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

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 can or should 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.) The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

3. 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.)

4. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

5. Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

6. Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint. Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

7. Responsibilities

7.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures.
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process and respond to deadlines and communication promptly.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved with respect.

7.2 Proprietor

Responsible for:

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

The Proprietor will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly. The Proprietor will also monitor the school's response to complaints and any panel recommendations. The Proprietor 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 The School's Secretary

The secretary acts 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.

7.5 Head of School

The Head of School is 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 the Complaints Co-ordinator to hear them) (see below).
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the Proprietor.
- 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 Proprietor.

The address and phone number for the Proprietor is:

Mr R Murphy
New Model Farm
Sarratt Road
Rickmansworth WD3 6AJ
07793 563 281

7.6 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.
- compiling reports for the Head of School as required.

7.7 Class Mentor

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

7.8 All staff

Is responsible 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.

8. Procedures General

There are three possible stages:

8.1 Stage 1 Informal Resolution

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

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 or parent has what they deem to be a serious complaint, they will request a Complaints Form from a member of staff or access one via this complaints policy. (See Appendix A). 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 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.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 24 hours and investigate and provide a response within three school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Head of School and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

8.2 Stage 2 - Formal Procedure

Detailed Guidance

All staff should be conversant with the following procedures:

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

- If a parent or pupil is concerned about anything to do with the education at CAL they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way.
- 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.
- 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.

8.3 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 this period.

If a trivial/simple verbal concern/complaint is made it might be possible to resolve it immediately. In more serious cases, or if a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing (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.

8.4 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 or Head of School. The issue will then be discussed with the relevant members of staff in order to determine the appropriate course of action.

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, they should be informed that they must make a formal complaint in writing to the Proprietor (directly to the Proprietor if the complaint is about the Head of School).

In 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 provided.

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. Where more time is necessary to complete the investigations, the complainant will be informed and another date set.

8.5 Stage 3

Hearings by an Independent Panel

Complainants who are not satisfied with the school's decision 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 Proprietor, giving details of the complaint. The Proprietor 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 Proprietor 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 Proprietor.

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 Proprietor as it wishes. It must send its report to the Proprietor the Head of School and (where relevant) the complainant within three working days of the hearing.

Proprietor Action

The Proprietor, after consultation with the Head of School, will consider the panel's findings and recommendations. Subsequently, 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 Proprietor'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.

It is important to note that complainants have the right to appeal a decision that seems unsatisfactory. This right will be fully explained in the outcome letter from the Proprietor to the complainant.

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, CAL 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. CAL 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).

9. 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, the parent may request the intercession of the Proprietor. The Proprietor's details can be obtained from the office. (Mrs L West - 01449736404)

A complaint directed to the Proprietor will, in the first instance, be given acknowledgement of receipt of complaint which should specify the expected response time. The Proprietor will carry out an investigation and will respond to the complainant within the response time stated (usually 28 days).

9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure.
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive.
- Knowingly provides false information.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of the scope of the complaint's procedure.
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g., refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaint's procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on.
- Makes a complaint particularly intended to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on school time.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

9.2 Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive manner, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address.
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#) Put any other strategy in place as necessary

9.3 Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of the following factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns.
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options.

- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is only to cause disruption or inconvenience.
- Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

9.4 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we had not previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete.
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint. If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.5 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants
- If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

9.6 Reporting and Recording

In all cases it is important for staff/parents or pupils 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. This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

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 complaints register will be kept by the Head of School for reporting purposes.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices.

The Proprietor will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Head of School and the SMT, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

9.7 Monitoring Arrangements

The Proprietor will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Head of School will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Head of School.

This policy will be reviewed by Governance every two years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Proprietor/Chair of Governance.

This Policy should be read alongside the following:

- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEN Policy
- SEN Information Report
- Student Behaviour Policy and Statement of Behaviour Principles
- Student Conduct Discipline & Exclusion Policy
- Attendance policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Admissions Policy

Appendix A

CENTRE ACADEMY London

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.