

POLICY FOR PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which -

This policy includes:

- Details of the three-stage process (informal, formal and panel hearing), including clear time scales for each stage and in line with the particular requirements set out for each stage in the regulations
- Arrangements for record keeping
- Confidentiality of correspondence, statements and records

Cameron House School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils (**for all classes including the EYFS; Reception Class**). However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be dealt with by the school in accordance with this procedure. *This policy also has due regard to the terms of the Equality Act 2010 and guidance provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as to its implementation in school.*

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 straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or Headmistress as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or Headmistress will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the 'line manager' will attempt to resolve the matter in five days or as soon as is practicable.
- The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints and concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within five days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then 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 will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the Headmistress, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take. If the complaint involves the Headmistress, then it should be put in writing to the Proprietor.
- In most cases, the Headmistress will speak to the parents concerned within forty-eight hours (2 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 further investigations. These will be completed in seven days or as soon as is practicable.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Copies of these minutes will be given to all relevant parties. Records of EYFS (Reception Class) complaints will be kept by the school for at least 3 years.
- Once the Headmistress is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmistress will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headmistress will write to the parents within the 10 working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why she is unable to issue her decision and informing the parents when she will do so, which will be within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint in any event.
- Where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, the school will make provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (Stage 3 below)
- The school provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is:
 - a) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - b) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headmistress

Stage 3: Panel Hearing:

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to involve Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Headmistress informing her of their decision to do so within 10 working days, whereupon the matter will be referred to the Principal. The Principal will then take responsibility for the organisation of a complaints panel hearing.

- The panel will consist of at least three persons, one panel member of whom is independent of the management and running of the school. The panel appointed by should consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. Members of the panel may be drawn from the local educational authority (RBKC), Heads of other schools or from a professional legal practice such as a lawyer or a representative from IAPs.
- The Proprietor, 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 working days.
- If the Proprietor and/or the members of the panel deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 days before the hearing. However consideration will be given to whether the information was realistically available earlier, whether the other party has time to consider it properly and comment on it and how prejudicial it is to admit it or refuse to admit it. Any such further particulars received within 5 days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it will not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- Provision will be made for copies of all documents relating to the complaint to be circulated to all persons concerned including parents, in advance of any panel hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by another person/s. This may be a relative, eye-witness, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. In most cases the full details of the further investigations should be given to both parties. If this involves taking evidence from anyone else, then this should only happen in the presence of both parties. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within 10 working days of the first hearing wherever possible but within 28 days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of their decision together with their reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the Headmistress, Proprietor and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual. A copy will be sent to the complainant, and a copy be available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Headmistress
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially.
- The School will provide for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing, the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and also ensure that 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

New for 2015, the written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure. In relation to these complaints, schools are required to record whether they are then resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing. It is up to schools to determine whether or how they also wish to keep a record of informal complaints. Many proprietors will want to ensure records are kept, even of informal complaints, for management purposes to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

Additional requirements apply for EYFS settings beyond those which apply to the main school:

- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- Providers must make available details of how to contact Ofsted, and/or ISI, if parents believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.
- Schools must notify parents about an inspection once they have been notified. Once the final inspection report has been provided, it must be supplied to parents of children who attend the setting regularly.

Footnotes to Complaints Procedure:

1. In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation. A record of all complaints and how they are resolved is kept by the Headmistress.
2. In the event of a panel hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the panel.
3. The Headmistress, who has responsibility for Child Protection procedures in school, will, as a matter of course, produce an annual report on the school's effectiveness and compliance with child protection issues and such issues will be an item on the agenda of all formal meetings with the Proprietor.
4. Parents with children in EYFS (Reception Class) may also address a complaint to Ofsted - 0845 640 4045 or ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) - 020 7600 0100

5. There are currently no formal complaints against the school. However, should this change at any time, the school will provide information to parents about the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Exclusions

The complaints standard does not require exclusions to be covered by the complaints process. Schools should certainly have a process for exclusions and, if they wish to do so, they can use the same process for exclusion appeals as they do for the hearing of complaints but this is not required by the standards. However, parents are entitled to the relevant information on the exclusions process through other relevant policies (for example, behaviour and sanctions). (see Behaviour Policy (Rewards, Sanctions, Behaviour and Discipline) – Policy Handbook Section 5 and also the Parents Terms and Conditions for further details)

There are currently no Formal Complaints against the school.

Approved by: 
(**Josie Cameron Ashcroft**)

Date: January 2016

Next Review: January 2017