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See Distribution

11 February 2019

## **COVENTRY SCHOOL FOUNDATION PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

The Coventry School Foundation prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure save where the complaint is referred at any stage to the Police or Local Authority at which point this Procedure will be held in abeyance. Coventry School Foundation makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils on the relevant School's website and in the School Office during the school day, and Coventry School Foundation will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Coventry School Foundation will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Anonymous complaints will always be referred to the Head for him/her to take such actions as he/she thinks fit and will not be dealt with under this procedure.

This procedure applies to all schools within the Coventry School Foundation, including those with Early Years Foundation Stage departments.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or an individual member of staff or another pupil and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. A complaint may be made orally, in writing or email.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

## **The Three Stage Complaints Procedure**

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing will be completed within a further 20 working days. Where timescales need to be extended to ensure a robust and fair process all involved will be notified of this and provided with an expected completion date.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

### **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

Any complaint whether made orally, in writing or by email should be made initially to the pupil's Form Tutor or Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him / her to consult a Head of Department or Deputy Head.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Teacher unless the Head of Department or Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him / her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Tutor or Teacher will make a written record and notify the relevant member of SLT of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the Form Tutor or Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

### **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head will meet / speak to the parents concerned within 5 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. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his / her decision. The Head will aim to respond to parents within 5 working days of the initial meeting.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will (or authorise another Governor to) call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as it practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his / her decision. The Chair will aim to respond to parents within 10 working days of the initial meeting with them.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing**

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write the Director of Finance and Operations (who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel) within 10 working days of receiving the outcome from the Stage 2 process.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Director of Finance and Operations, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 working days. The compilation of the Panel will be notified to the complainant who will be given the right to object to any member(s) provided reasons are given.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 findings and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head and provided, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.

In the exceptional circumstance of a Panel Hearing having to be adjourned for further enquires to be made and/or for further evidence to be heard or otherwise put before the Panel then the Chair of the Panel shall give directions as to the timetable by which the enquiries must be conducted and/or the evidence put before the Panel and in what form. The Director of Finance and Operations will also disclose copies of the evidence to the complainant(s), unless, on advice, the Chair of the Panel decides it is inappropriate in the particular circumstances of the complaint. (This may be because the evidence is of a sensitive nature and it is not in the interests of the complainant to see it).

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the Foundation will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the Foundation and school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)

- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Outcome of complaint (if resolved).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Prospective and current parents can, upon request, have information about the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

### **The Independent Schools Inspectorate**

Notwithstanding the procedures explained in this document any parents have the right to address complaints to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). See Annex A for contact details. Further, the Foundation will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, details of all complaints.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (Aged 3- 5)**

#### **Written Complaints Relating to the Requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS**

The Foundation will provide ISI / Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

#### **Complaints to ISI Regarding EYFS Service Providers**

Parents may also complain to ISI if they wish. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net).

#### **Complaints to Ofsted Regarding EYFS Service Providers**

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Parents who are also employees**

The Foundation is proud that many of its employees choose to send their children to a Foundation school and acknowledges that parents who are also employees (parent employees) must have the same opportunity to raise concerns and complaints as parents who are not employees. However, it is inevitable that there will be added complexity when a 'parent employee' wishes to raise concerns or a complaint involving a work colleague regardless of the work relationship / hierarchy between the two.

The following principles should be adhered to in situations where a 'parent employee' wishes to raise a complaint or a concern as a parent.

- The spirit and general intent of this policy and process will apply unless circumstances make it inappropriate to do so. In such circumstances the process that will be followed will be clearly communicated to all parties along with the rationale for the amended approach.
- Wherever possible the complaint or concern should be raised by an appropriate person (other parent, family member) rather than the 'parent employee'.
- There should be a clear distinction between communication as work colleagues and communication as a 'parent employee' and a teacher. The later should, where possible take place outside of the

workplace infrastructure and processes – for example using personal rather than work emails, discussing issues in a parent /teacher context outside of the normal working day.

- Complaints and concerns from 'parent employees' should be raised in accordance with this policy and not based on existing working relationships or the access that such working relationships provide.
- Confidentiality and discretion are important principles in the handling of any complaint / concern but become heightened when a complaint is raised by a 'parent employee' involving another employee. All parties involved must recognise and adhere to these requirements. Where appropriate an independent contact point for support will be provided for both the 'parent employee' and the employee about whom the complaint / concern has been raised.
- 'Parent employees' must not involve themselves in the investigation of any complaints / concerns they have raised or take any action which could be seen to prejudice the investigation.
- Once a complaint /concern has been raised 'parent employees' must not take any action which is possible solely because they are an employee. E.g. a 'parent employee' may request that a child is taken out of a lesson or activity pending an investigation, but may not unilaterally remove their child from such an activity during the school day.
- Where it is not possible for a 'parent employee' to raise concerns directly with the teacher involved, the complaint / concern should be raised with the next level of management.
- At the informal stage an appropriate third party should be present at any discussions between the 'parent employee' and the teacher.

### Review

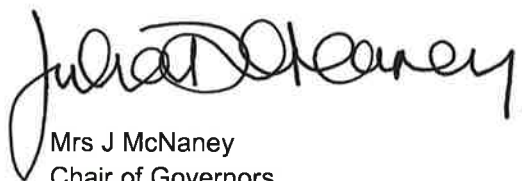
This policy is to be reviewed by 1 February 2020 or on change of related policies.

**Drafted By:**



Mrs J Hammond  
Director of Finance and Operations

**Endorsed By:**



Mrs J McNaney  
Chair of Governors

**THE APPOINTED CONVENER:**

Mrs J Hammond  
Director of Finance and Operations

**RELEVANT ADDRESSES AND CONTACT NUMBERS:**

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Coventry  
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024 76 271203

Mr J Slack  
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King Henry VIII Senior School  
Warwick Road  
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024 76 271100

Mr N Price  
Headmaster  
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Coundon Road  
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Mrs G Bowser  
Head teacher  
King Henry VIII Preparatory School  
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**THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE CONTACT DETAILS:**

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