



Complaints Policy

General Principles

The following procedures should not be used for complaints that fall under existing procedures and are therefore covered by other documentation:

- Curriculum
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs
- Staff grievances

Parents can raise concerns by contacting their class teacher, a member of SMT or the Principal. If the concern is not resolved informally parents may lodge a formal complaint. The procedure for lodging a formal complaint is contained within this policy. This policy is available for all parents via the Parent Handbook.

Procedures should be as speedy as possible – consistent and fair to all concerned

Each stage of the procedure will have known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

Confidentiality

All concerns and complaints will be treated with discretion. It will be made clear to parents that making a complaint will not result in their child being penalised. Complainants will, however, be made aware that some information will have to be shared with those involved in order that the complaint can be investigated. Anonymous complaints will normally be disregarded unless they relate to a serious issue. The Principal and CEO will decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Redress

If the outcome of the complaints procedure shows the school is at fault, redress will be in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- A promise that the event complained of will not recur
- An undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint

Staff awareness

All staff will be made aware of the procedures, as potentially many will be involved with handling complaints, especially at the informal level. Staff have clear information about which staff have responsibilities so that parents do not get continually passed from one to another.



Support for a member of staff complained against

Staff who may be questioned as part of the investigation of a complaint will be treated fairly and they will always have the opportunity to put their case. A friend or representative may accompany them at any stage.

The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff and this will need to be made clear to all concerned. However there may be occasions when a complaint leads to a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints process on hold. If so, the complainant should be informed of this, without going into details, and updated regularly on likely further delay. After the disciplinary process is completed it will be necessary to decide what further response to the complainant is required.

Record keeping

Complaints are recorded and monitored regularly by staff by using a standard proforma (see appendix 1). Records of these are kept in the child's class file. The Principal keeps a central file for complaints which are not resolved immediately and therefore investigated by her. Recording begins at the point when an initial concern or complaint cannot be resolved immediately but needs some investigation and/or consultation with others in school and a subsequent report back to the parent.

A Staged Approach

Newton International School D Ring have adopted a staged approach to the complaints procedure as follows:

Stage 1: The First Contacts

There needs to be clarity as to the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the Class Teacher, Key Stage Coordinator or Administrative Staff, depending upon who is approached first. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff as appropriate, without any formality, either in person, over the telephone or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent and this must be taken into consideration.

It may be unclear at first whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

Stage 2: Referral to the Principal

At this stage it should be clear that the concern is a definite complaint and should be investigated according to school guidelines (see appendices 2 and 3) to ensure consistency and to make sure that nothing happens which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

In some cases, the Principal may already have been involved in looking at the matter; in other cases it may be her first involvement and it may be appropriate to delegate the investigation at this stage to another member of staff.



In some cases the Principal will have already been involved at Stage 1, or the complaint may be against them, in which cases Stage 2 should be carried out by the CEO. In other cases where the Principal has delegated the investigation at Stage 2 to another member of staff, she is advised to become involved if the parent is not satisfied, before the Stage 2 process is completed and the matter referred to the CEO or SEC.

Stage 3: Review by the CEO

Complaints rarely reach this level, but it is important that the CEO is prepared to deal with them when necessary. At this stage, the aim will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least be taken seriously.



Appendix 1: Complaint Proforma

Parental Issues

Child's Name:

Class:

Parents Name:

Contact Tel.No.:

Nature of Issue: 1. Child 2. Class 3. School 4. Admin 5. Other

Brief details of issue:

Has the Class Teacher been contacted? Yes / No If yes, on what date?

If no – please arrange a meeting with the Class Teacher: Date of Meeting:

Outcome of Meeting:

Has the Key Stage Coordinator been contacted? Yes / No If yes, on what date?

If no – please arrange a meeting with the Key Stage Coordinator: Date of Meeting:

Outcome of Meeting:

Has the Deputy Principal/Head of Primary been contacted? Yes / No If yes, on what date?

If no – please arrange a meeting with the Deputy Principal or Head of Primary as appropriate. Date of Meeting:

Outcome of Meeting:

When all of the above have been completed and the situation is still ongoing, please arrange a meeting with the Principal via the Principal's PA: Date of meeting:

Final Resolution:

Signed:

Date:



Appendix 2: School Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: The first contact

- Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
- If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, they must make a clear note of the date, name and contact telephone number (see appendix 1).
- All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. They will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.
- If the matter is brought to the attention of the Principal she may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage if the complaint is more serious; if the complaint is against the Principal the parent will be advised to contact the CEO.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.
- Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further, they should email the Principal.

Stage 2: Referral to the Principal for investigation

- The Principal (or designated person) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- The Principal will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet her to supplement any information provided previously.
- If necessary, the Principal will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved or delegate another member of SMT to do that on her behalf. If the complaint centres on a student, the student should also be interviewed. If a member of staff is complained against, they must have the opportunity to present their case (see General Principles).
- The Principal will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Principal will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision



and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant may also be advised that should they wish to take the complaint further, they should inform the CEO within one month of receiving the letter.

- If the complaint is against the Principal, or if the Principal has been closely involved at Stage 1, the CEO will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3: Review by the CEO

- The CEO will contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for her to review the complaint.
- The Principal will be asked to forward any documentation for consideration to the CEO and her findings with regards to the complaint.
- The CEO will pass her findings on to the Principal who will inform the complainant of the outcome. If the complaint is about the Principal, the CEO will contact the complainant directly with the outcome of her findings and what action will be taken.
- The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records.



Appendix 3: Flowchart of initial complaints procedure



If you have an issue or complaint ...

Have you filled in a form with the receptionist and made an appointment to see the class teacher?

YES
Was the issue resolved?

YES

NO
Have you made an appointment to see the key-stage co-ordinator for your child's year group?

NO
Ask the receptionist to make an appointment for you. Leave your tel.no./email so you can be contacted. Outline what your complaint or issue is about.

YES
Was the issue resolved?

YES

NO
Ask the receptionist to make an appointment for you with a member of the Senior Management Team. Leave your tel.no./email so you can be contacted. Outline what your complaint or issue is about.

NO
Ask the receptionist to make an appointment for you. Leave your tel.no./email so you can be contacted. Outline what your complaint or issue is about.



Appendix 4: Concerns and Complaints about the School

Guidance Notes for Parents

If you have a concern or a complaint

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome your suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's Class Teacher.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by a member of SMT in the first instance, you should make an appointment to see the relevant Key Stage Coordinator to discuss the problem face to face. You can do this by ringing the school, speaking to the Reception Staff or email/write to the Key Stage Coordinator directly.

All staff will make every effort to solve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view, but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

What to do next

If you are dissatisfied with the Teacher's initial response (or with the Key Stage Coordinator's initial reaction if they have been involved) you can make an appointment to see the Head of Primary or the Deputy Principal. This should be done via the Principal's PA or Reception Staff.

Further Action

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not happy you may wish to speak with the Principal. You need to make an appointment via the Principal's PA in order to do this. She will take details from you and if necessary, investigate the complaint on your behalf and will contact you with her findings and what action has been taken. Please note that if the outcome of the complaints procedure shows the school is at fault, redress will be in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. You may also receive one of the following if deemed appropriate:

- An apology
- An explanation
- A promise that the event complained of will not recur
- An undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint



Appendix 5: Formal Complaints Form



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Formal Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the Principal who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken	
Your Name	
Pupil's Name and Class	
Your relationship to the pupil	
Daytime tel. no.	
Please give details of your complaint here (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)	
What actions, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	
Signature	
Date	
For Office Use only	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By Whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	



Appendix 6: Record Keeping Form



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Parent/Teacher Interview Form

Teacher:
Parent of:
Reason(s) for Interview:
Date:
Interview Notes:
Further Action Points: