

**Cruddas Park Early Years Centre**  
**Handling complaints about the school**



**Our policy is to:**

- Promote an understanding of the school
- Listen to our pupils and parents without discrimination or bias
- Welcome complaints as a positive means of promoting pupil/parent satisfaction
- Use complaints as a means of identifying opportunities to improve services, teaching techniques or the learning environment if required
- Seek to resolve complaints swiftly, fairly and in a consistent manner
- Have clear and published procedures for dealing with complaints
- Keep complainants, and other key stakeholders, informed about progress as well as the eventual outcome
- Provide redress where a complaint is found to have substance
- Monitor the pattern and frequency of complaints at senior level
- Review regularly the effectiveness of complaints procedures

**Procedures**

**General Principles:**

The school's priority is to serve the needs of pupils and parents. We try to serve as efficiently and as courteously as possible but things can go wrong. We welcome complaints and comments as an opportunity to improve the quality of the services we offer and ensure equity and accessibility of services and opportunities to all who use, visit or work at the Centre.

The following general principles will apply

- The desirability of settling differences informally and amicably wherever possible
- The need for more formal mechanisms for dealing fairly and effectively with complaints which have proved impossible to settle informally
- Ensuring that parents, staff and governors are informed of the procedures.

All parties dealing with complaints should seek to deal with each stage within 15 days of receiving notification of the complaint or of the continuing dissatisfaction of the complainant.

## **Definitions**

Definitions are provided in Appendix 1

Special procedures are available for complaints regarding the curriculum of a school, collective worship and for considering complaints about the way in which pupils' special needs are met.

Newcastle City Council has a complaints policy and procedures in respect of its services.

Details are available from the Civic Centre (0191 2787878)

## **Complaints about the school**

Complaints about school issues should be raised, in the first instance, with school staff.

### **Who can complain?**

Anyone can complain if they receive a service, seek a service or are affected by the school in a way which they find dissatisfactory, discriminatory or unacceptable for any other reason.

### **How a complaint can be made**

Complaints may be made in person, by telephone or made in writing, whichever format is the complainants preference and they feel is most appropriate for the circumstances. A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue. If they feel more comfortable in doing so they may prefer to contact the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors. All staff will seek to help a complainant address their issue, even where the issue is not that individual's area of responsibility.

### **Informal Complaint**

An informal complaint is an initial approach by an individual to the school expressing dissatisfaction with some aspect of the service, its action or inaction. Informal complaints, however made, are complaints which can be resolved quickly and simply, usually at the point of service delivery, and do not require detailed or lengthy investigation.

A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue.

Should the complaint not be resolved the complainant will be referred to the Head Teacher. The Head will seek to deal with the issue informally wherever possible and appropriate.

Should an initial informal discussion not resolve the situation, and the complainant indicates their continuing dissatisfaction, then the Head Teacher will convene an interview to review the issue in detail.

Users who make informal complaints will be given information regarding follow up procedures, in the event that they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint and wish to take the matter further.

### **Formal Complaint**

A complaint becomes formal when the user remains dissatisfied after making an informal complaint, or alternatively, when, from the outset, a complaint cannot be dealt with simple and quickly and requires more in-depth investigation.

When a complaint becomes formal, care will be taken to

- Clarify the complaint
- Clarify the outcome sought which will satisfy the complainant, and also the Centre's expectations with regards its own standards of service delivery
- Check whether the complainant needs support of any kind (for example, if they have a disability or perhaps a difference in language), which could for them be a barrier to them understanding the complaints procedure and eventual outcome.
- Arrange any support identified, in order to prevent any social exclusion for the complainant, ensuring the process is equitable for anyone who invokes it and is not discriminatory or inconsistent in any way.

Once a complaint has become formal

- the progress of the complaint will be monitored by the Head Teacher
- A full written response will be made within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, a reply should be sent indicating progress to date and an estimate of time to make a full response
- Where a complainant would be at a disadvantage if they were sent a response in writing (for example due to a particular disability, difficulty or a difference in language), they should be offered the opportunity to receive their response verbally, with appropriate interpretation and/or representation available as required.
- The complainant will be given the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the complaint.

- The complainant will be advised how to proceed if not satisfied.

A complaint of serious maladministration should be progressed immediately as a formal complaint. The Chair of the Governing Body should be the first person to approach where the matter could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Head Teacher.

Where a complaint involves an allegation of financial irregularity then the City Treasurer will be advised by the Head or Chair as appropriate.

The papers relating to the complaint will be passed to the Chair of Governors who will decide how the complaint is to be progressed.

The Chair will ensure

- the complaint is quickly referred to the relevant Committee (or to the Head if the complaints procedures at that level have not been exhausted)
- the complaint is not reported to the whole Governing Body until it is resolved, and not in detail
- all parties to the complaint are given a fair and equal hearing (with appropriate support / representation where required)
- the decision of the committee is given in writing to the complainant (or, where this would put the complainant at a disadvantage, verbal feedback can be provided).
- the complainant is told (either in writing, or in person if more appropriate), of any right of appeal if the decision is given against him or her.

### **External Review**

If the complainant remains unhappy after the matter has been considered by the Governing Body, then the complainant will be asked to contact the Head of the Administration Department at the Civic Centre.

The Head of the Administration Department will carry out the review of the Complaint and advise all parties of the findings.

### **Ombudsman**

Where a complainant indicates they remain dissatisfied with the result of the review carried out by the Head of the Administration Department they will be advised that they may refer the matter to a Local Councillor and/or to the Commissioner for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman) and given the relevant details. This will normally be done by the Head of the Administration Department.

## **Remedy**

Where a complaint is found to be justified a remedy should be provided. A remedy needs to be appropriate to the complaint. In many cases the remedy will be an apology from the appropriate individual (and/or from the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors). In some cases the remedy will be the provision of a service desired by the complainant. In other cases a change of procedure, teaching practice or the environment, to prevent future difficulties for the complainant, or for customers in general, may be the appropriate remedy. There may be circumstances where the complainant has sustained loss or suffering. In such cases, financial compensation may be considered, and in all such cases a report to the Governing Body will be required before payments are made.

## **Annual Review**

In the case of complaints being received, a brief report will be presented to the Governing Body, which will detail:

- the number of complaints
- the subjects concerned
- the time taken to resolve complaints
- the assessment of complainant satisfaction
- changes brought about as a result of reviewing complaints

It is suggested this report would be an annual event if necessary. This will be normally undertaken in the Summer Term for the previous year (April/March)

## **Conclusion**

The management team and governors have the responsibility for monitoring this policy. This monitoring and reviewing will inform future school development planning.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.



## **APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS**

### **Complaints**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the school or their staff affecting an individual or group.

A complaint is not

- a request for a service
- a request for information or explanation of school policy or practice
- a matter for which there is a right of appeal within the LEA or to an independent body or a legal remedy

It should be noted that even where an appeal procedure is in place a complaint could still arise regarding the way that procedure is operated.

### **Informal Complaints**

An informal complaint is one which can be resolved locally and quickly, which does not require an in depth investigation, and which generally does not require to be put in writing.

### **Formal Complaints**

A formal complaint is one which cannot be immediately resolved to service user's satisfaction, and therefore, requires an investigation and which is generally put in writing.

### **Anonymous complaints**

The school does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on information received in this way.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Curriculum/collective worship – special procedures**

Complaints about the curriculum of a school, collective worship or other related matters are dealt with by a special procedure in accordance with section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Special procedures are available for considering complaints about the way in which pupil's special needs are met. A copy of the procedures will be made available to anyone wishing to make such a complaint; The Local Authority (LA) can provide a copy of the procedures in languages other than English.

### **Local authority (LA) has no power to direct a school**

Under the Local Management of Schools arrangements, introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, the LA has no power to direct a school in relation to a complaint from a parent or pupil, unless there is a statutory basis for doing so. However it may act as arbiter and advise a school where a complaint has not been resolved by the staff or governors. Any parent who is unsure of the procedures, or who feels that the school has not considered their complaint properly, may contact officers of the Children's Services Department for further advice.

<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Changes made</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Date Shared</b>
December 2018 Next review Dec '21	December 2018	Karen Collins Chair of Governors	Dec 2018-shared and ratified by GB 12/12/2018