



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

Caelum House aims to provide the highest quality education and care for all our children. We aim to offer a welcome to each individual child and family and to provide a warm and caring environment within which all children can learn and develop.

We believe children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful and serious attention to any concerns that you may have by following our complaints procedures as outlined below:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- (a) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. The school encourages parents to make contact at an early stage if they do have any worries or concerns in order that we can work together to address the concern before it escalates to the

point that might require any sort of formal procedures.

- (b) If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact the appropriate member of staff directly, depending on the nature of the concern. In many cases, this direct communication will result in the matter being resolved quickly by the member of staff to the parents' satisfaction. The Headteacher should be made aware of any complaint as soon as it is received by the member of staff. The member of staff should make a brief written note of the concern / complaint and of any conversations or meetings with parents and of the action / resolution.
- (c) If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult or actively involve the Headteacher.
- (d) If the concern is more general, or if parents feel it is more appropriate, they should make contact with the Headteacher. The Headteacher may consult and involve other staff in the resolution as appropriate.
- (e) Timescale: If parents raise a concern or complaint, the school will make contact within 7 working days of receiving the concern / complaint.

(f) Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days of acknowledgement, or in the event that the parent and member of staff fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent will be advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. However, there could a longer timescale for the informal stage if there are extenuating circumstances and the school and parent both wish to continue seeking an informal resolution.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

(a) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in a formal written letter (e-mail is acceptable) to the Headteacher stating explicitly that they wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the nature of the complaint, the most appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the letter should be addressed to the Principal Chair of Governors who will then appoint an appropriate person to deal with the complaint.

(b) Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing (or e-mail) by the Headteacher 5 working days of being received.

(c) In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to, or meet, with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will

be reached at this stage.

- (d) It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations. If this is the case, an appropriate timescale will be agreed with the parent for further discussion / communication.
- (e) Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing (most likely by e-mail) normally within ten working days (but up to 28 working days) after the formal complaint was acknowledged. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision.
- (f) The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The complainant will be informed if due to exceptional circumstances any additional time is necessary to complete the investigation.
- (g) If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing:

- (a) If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Chairman of Governors at the school address. The Chair of Governors is responsible for making the arrangements for a panel hearing. In the written request for a

Panel Hearing, the parent should state the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. He/she should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the school's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see. Copies of all such documents shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days before the hearing.

- (b) The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and will schedule a meeting of the Panel, normally within ten working days thereafter. The school will take all reasonable steps when making the arrangements for the hearing to facilitate the parent exercising their right to attend. If, having indicated they wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this complaints procedure, the parent decides not to attend the hearing, the hearing will take place in their absence. Under these circumstances, the panel will make findings on the substance of the complaint on the basis of the evidence available.
- (c) The Panel appointed by the Chair of Governors will consist of at least three people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- (d) The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

- (e) If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- (f) Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it would be carried out.
- (g) After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations shall be confirmed in writing to the parent and, where relevant, to the person complained about, normally within three working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Principal, Headteacher and the Chair of Directors.
- (h) Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required by the school by paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; namely, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligations prevail. In accordance with data protection principles,

details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

A written record will be kept by the Headteacher of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld), and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

The Governors will maintain oversight of these records in order to determine the appropriate implementation of this policy and to respond to any patterns of complaints which may be apparent

This policy does not cover habitual or vexatious complaints. The school has a separate 'Habitual or Vexatious Complaints Policy' which is available on request.

We hope that at all times you will be happy with the service provided, our intention is to work in partnership with parents and the community generally and we welcome suggestions on how to improve our school at any time.

The role of the registering authority

In some circumstances, it will be necessary to bring in the Ofsted's Inspection and Support Unit (IST), who have a duty to ensure that laid down

requirements are adhered to. Either the parent or Head Teacher can refer to them if necessary. They would be involved if a child appeared to be at risk or where there seemed to be a breach of registration requirements. In these cases both the Parent and School would be informed of the complaints process and Ofsted would ensure a proper investigation of the complaint followed by appropriate action.

We believe that most complaints are made constructively and can be sorted out at an early stage. We also believe that it is in the best interests of Caelum House and parents that complaints should be taken seriously and dealt with fairly and in a way which respects confidentiality.