



CHURCHILL
SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

Complaints procedure

This policy applies to all complaints by parents of pupils attending Churchill Special Free School, that are made against the school, except in relation to admissions, exclusions and child protection allegations, which have their own processes. This policy covers complaints that have been raised with the school as a matter of concern but which have not been capable of informal resolution and which the complainant or the school consider should be dealt with on a formal basis.

It is the policy of the Samuel Ward Trust, which governs Churchill Special Free School to treat all complaints very seriously, with proper dispatch, and where errors have been made to learn from them. Should the occasion arise, the Trust will act fairly but firmly where its provision or the conduct of its staff has been less than satisfactory.

Complaints are a valuable indicator of performance and are to be responded to in a sympathetic and consistent manner. It is vital that the complainant is kept informed of progress by the nominated person to avoid confusion and/or conflicting messages.

The complainant may withdraw the complaint at any time. Findings are to be recorded and appropriate action taken to reduce the likelihood of similar complaints in the future. In all cases, correspondence and/or records of any discussions must be documented and a copy retained for a minimum of 10 years for future reference or query.

Informal Complaint Process

An issue or concern might be raised with any member of staff within the school. If approached directly or by telephone the individual staff member should listen carefully to the complainant and show empathy and understanding but must be careful not to react or jump to conclusions. The staff member should confirm whether the complainant is content for the individual to deal with the matter informally, or whether they wish the matter to be treated as a formal complaint. It is essential that the staff member attempts to identify the significant issues and the outcome that is being sought.

The school expects that before seeking to use this formal policy the complainant:

- a) will have raised the matter with the pupil's Learning Coach, if the matter relates to a pupil;
- b) will have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.

The Chair of Governors shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

The school will attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible and then inform the complainant of action taken (within the bounds of confidentiality). If the issue cannot be resolved informally, then it must be treated as a formal complaint, and the steps described in the Formal Complaint Process must be followed.

Formal Complaint Process

All complaints must be treated as 'Confidential' but copies of all correspondence, statements and records must be made available for inspection by authorised bodies, e.g. Department for Education (DfE).

If a serious allegation has been made or external agencies are to be involved with a complaint relating to child or member of staff it is possible that an external investigation will take place. The appropriate Director and the Chief Executive must be informed. It may also be necessary to notify the Police. Assistance should be given to external investigators.

Advice must be taken before any action is taken that might be deemed to hinder, interfere with or prejudice an external investigation. If external agencies have been involved at any stage, no report is to be made to the complainant unless and until those agencies have confirmed in writing that they

intend to take no further action against any individual. The complainant should though be informed that the relevant agency is investigating and that they will be informed of the outcome.

First stage of the Formal Procedure

1. The Complainant must put the complaint in writing unless the complainant has a disability which prevents this, in which case the complainant may contact the school office for assistance. The complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, Churchill Special Free School, Chalkstone Way, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LD.
2. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter.
3. An investigation of the complaint will be carried out by the Head of School who will report to the Executive Principal.
4. The Executive Principal will discuss the matter with the complainant. This may be during a meeting or on the telephone. Whenever reasonably possible such discussion will take place within 15 school days of the complaint being received.
5. The Executive Principal will then put his or her findings in writing and indicate what steps if any should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible this will be done within 15 school days of the discussion with the complainant at 4 above.

Where a complaint relates to the Head of School, the Chair will appoint a Deputy to take over this role. Otherwise, the procedure for the First Stage will remain the same.

Second Stage of the Formal Procedure

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first stage, she/he may request that the complaint be considered by the Chair of the Governing Body. Such a request should be in writing addressed to the Clerk to the Governors.
2. The Chair will conduct a review of the matter to date.
3. The Chair will report his/her findings to the Principal and the Parent within 15 school days of receipt of the written request to use the Second Stage.

Third Stage of the Formal Procedure

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first and second stage, the complainant may request that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body which will comprise two members of the Board of Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the school.
2. A request to use the third stage must be in writing, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors at the school, within 10 school days of the response being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
3. The Clerk will invite the School to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The School will do this within 15 school days and at the end of that period (whether or not the School has responded) the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the School and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the School's response time. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied.

4. The following are entitled to attend the Panel meeting, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - (a) The parent/s and/or one representative;
 - (b) The Principal of the School and/or one representative; and
 - (c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.

5. The Panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be
 - (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
 - (ii) available for inspection on the School premises by the School Trust and the Executive Principal

6. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the Clerk to the Governors will notify all concerned.

7. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the first stage or proceed to a panel hearing

8. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the School is otherwise required by law to disclose them.

The complaints procedure is intended to be extended to those persons who may have a legitimate complaint relating to the school and where any complaint may not be pursued through another statutory procedure. It is anticipated that these persons will be parents of pupils currently at the school, as defined by Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, and those with parental responsibility, as defined in the Children Act 1989. These arrangements do not cover pupils who are no longer at the school.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review programme.

Author Georgina Ellis	Date Spring Term 2016	Frequency of Review Three Yearly
Adopted by the Governing Body	Reviewed	Reviewed
Date:	Date:	Date:
Signed	Signed	Signed