

Chapel End Infant School

&

Early Years Centre

Complaints Policy



Updated: January 2017

Next review: January 2020

Signed: _____ Headteacher

Signed: _____ Chair of Governors

Chapel End Infant School and Early Years Centre

Vision

To provide the children of Chapel End with a high quality educational experience within a nurturing environment, giving them the best possible start to their lifelong learning journey.

Mission

We will nurture confident and resilient children by:

- Creating a culture of achievement in a safe and caring environment
- Offering an engaging and inclusive curriculum that makes the most of our outdoor green space
- Giving all of our children the confidence and skills they need to realise their potential
- Providing challenge, praising effort and encouraging everyone to be the best that they can be.

Values

Caring, sharing and trying our best.

We take care of each other.

We share our time, enthusiasm and skills.

We try our best in all we do.

We celebrate, value and respect diversity within our school community.

This statement has been developed in consultation with the whole school community.

Equal opportunities

At Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre school we believe that every child is entitled to equal access to the curriculum, regardless of race, gender, class or disability.

Inclusion

We are committed to promoting learning and teaching environments for all, which embraces the values of inclusive educational practices.

Through a child-centred approach, we aim to ensure that education is accessible and relevant to all our learners. At Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre we respect each other and celebrate diversity and difference.

Introduction

We believe that our school provides an inclusive and supportive learning environment where children benefit from the best possible education. All our staff are committed to this aim and work hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress. However, we recognise that sometimes parents and carers have concerns that they want to let us know about. The following policy sets how the school deals with those concerns.

General principles

This policy applies to most of the complaints that the school receives. However, it is not intended to cover matters for which there is a specific statutory process to object, complain or appeal (for example, complaints about delivery of the National Curriculum).

Separate procedures also exist for appeals about special needs assessment (Chapel End & Early Years Centre Special Needs Policy) and school admissions (LA school admissions appeals procedures) and exclusions (the school follows DFE guidance, 'The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) Regulations 2012.)

Concerns about allegations of child abuse or staff discipline will be dealt with through separate agreed procedures that have been adopted for these purposes (Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre Safeguarding Policy including Whistle Blowing Policy and Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre Child Protection Policy).

In some circumstances it will be necessary to contact Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education as the registering authority for EY Provision):-

Ofsted
South England Regional Office
2nd Floor
The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1
Telephone: 0845 6 40 40 40
E-mail: southcie@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted have a duty to ensure statutory requirements are adhered to. The registering authority would be involved if a child appeared to be at risk or where there seems to be a possible breach of registration requirements. In these cases both parent/carers and the School would be informed and the registering authority will ensure a proper investigation of the complaint followed by appropriate action.

Aims and objectives

We aim to:

- Be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint;
- Take complaints seriously and consider them carefully and thoroughly;
- Deal with complaints swiftly, fairly and in confidence.

Where we do not uphold a complaint, we will explain why. If we find we have done something wrong, we will say sorry and do what we can to put things right.

We believe it is possible for us to learn from complaints. The resolution of a complaint gives us the opportunity to improve our practices and develop strong partnerships with parents/carers. This is why the Governing Body regularly look at the number of complaints the school receives and monitor the outcomes.

Complaints procedures

Procedures for dealing with general concerns:

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures.

The procedure is divided into four stages:

Stage 1 (informal): complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint)

Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher

Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors

Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by Governing Body complaints appeal panel

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

Stage 1 – Your initial contact with the school

- Many concerns will be dealt with informally when they are known to the school. The first point of contact should be the child's class teacher.
- Contact could be made face to face, by telephone or in writing as soon as possible.
- The complainant will be updated on the progress of the school's enquiries (within 10 working days) and will have the opportunity to have their matter considered further once a response had been made.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied following this informal approach, the concern will become a formal complaint and the school will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage 2/3 - Formal consideration of your complaint

- The written complaint should be addressed to the headteacher (a copy of the school's complaint form is attached to this document. It is also available on the school website). If,

however, the complaint concerns the headteacher personally, it should be sent to Governor Services marked "For the attention of the Chair of Governors".

- If the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors or any individual governor, it should be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body.
- The complaint will be acknowledged in writing, with a copy of the school's procedures as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within three working days.
- A full response will be made to the complainant within ten working days. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, then the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay.
- As part of the consideration of the complaint, the complainant might be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
- The headteacher, or chair of governors may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
- Following the meeting, the headteacher or chair of governors will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the school will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
- Once the relevant facts have been established, a written response will be sent to the complainant. This will give a full explanation of the headteacher's or chair of governors' decision and the reasons for it.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation and the school's findings, they could request to proceed to Stage 4, as described below.

Stage 4 - Consideration by a complaints review panel

- If the concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and the complainant is not happy with the outcome, the Chair of Governors will instruct the Clerk to set up a complaints review panel to consider it. This is a formal process.
- The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complainant an opportunity to have their complaint heard in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.
- The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

- The clerk to the governing body will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within **20 working days**.
- The complainant will be asked whether they wish to provide any **further written documentation** in support of their complaint. It can include witness statements, or the complainant could ask witnesses to give evidence in person.
- The headteacher will prepare a **written report** for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
- The clerk will inform the parent, headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the

- panel by letter, at least **five working days** in advance of the meeting. All parties will receive the same written documentation. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With the agreement of the chair of the panel, the headteacher may invite **members of staff** directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to attend the meeting,
- No evidence or witnesses **previously undisclosed** will be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
 - The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly **minuted**. The complainant can request a copy of the minutes, this is at the panel's discretion.
 - During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - you to explain your complaint;
 - you to hear the school's response from the headteacher;
 - you to question the headteacher about the complaint;
 - you to be questioned by the headteacher about the complaint;
 - the panel members to be able to question you and the headteacher;
 - any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
 - you and the headteacher to make a final statement.
 - In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the headteacher and yourself **within two weeks**. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
 - The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint.
 - Depending on the outcome, the panel can:
 - Dismiss all or part of your complaint;
 - Uphold all or part of your complaint;
 - Decide what action is needed in order to put matters right;
 - recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
 - The clerk will send you and the headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel **within two weeks**.

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome after stage 4, or the way that the complaint was handled at school level, they can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the following address:

The Secretary of State
The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at:
Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester, M1 2WD

Protracted complaints

Once the panel have issued their decision, the complaints process is at an end. This means the school will not look at the same issue again unless there are very strong reasons for doing so (for example, where fresh evidence has come to light that could not have been provided previously). If a complainant attempts to reopen the same issue, the school may acknowledge this, but will not respond to it.

Chapel End Infant School & Early Year's Centre is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre defines unreasonable complainants as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;

- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre.

Chapel End Infant School & Early Years Centre Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the Headteacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name: Relationship with school [e.g. parent of a pupil on the schools roll]: Pupil's name [if relevant to your complaint]: Your Address: Daytime telephone number Evening telephone number
Please give details of your complaint, [including dates, names of witnesses etc...], to allow the matter to be fully investigated: You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional paperwork, if you wish. If you have already provided information it would be helpful if you could summarise the main points above.
Number of Additional pages attached =
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? [i.e. whom have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?]
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

For school Use: Date Received: Received by: Date acknowledgement sent: Acknowledgement sent by:
