

CEDARS

Short Stay School

Policy Title	Complaints
Review Committee	Full
Date Approved	November 2024
Review Date	November 2027
Responsible for Day to Day Management	Headteacher

CEDARS

Complaints Policy

Status

Statutory

Purpose

Cedars' values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and others who have a stake in the school. The Management Committee believes that constant feedback is an important ingredient in self-improvement and raising standards. Pupils, parents, carers, or other adults who have concerns or complaints should feel that they can be voiced and will be considered seriously. All complainants have the right to be accompanied when making the complaint, and pupils may be accompanied by a parent or another adult.

There are various principles behind this policy:

- There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is likely to require discussion between teacher, pupil and parent. If the concern is not resolved by that means then it could become a complaint. "A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction which needs a response from the school." (*North Tyneside LA*)
- A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security or when Cedars' stated values or aims are being ignored.
- A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.
- We will seek to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible.
- Investigations will be full, fair and swift.
- People will be kept informed of progress and the decisions reached.
- Every effort will be made to respect confidentiality.
- Feedback will be actively sought from those voicing complaints in order to minimise complaints and maximise accountability.

Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other Cedars policies.

Roles and responsibilities of Head teacher and Governors

The **Head teacher** will ensure that:

- This complaints policy and the procedures (see Appendix 1) are made known to all stakeholders through newsletters and the prospectus
- In the first instance all complaints will be received in writing by the Head teacher, who will document the complaint (names, dates, times, events), acknowledge in writing within three days of receipt, and consult with all those directly concerned.
- The Head teacher will appoint a senior member of staff to investigate the complaint.
- The complainant receives a written explanation of the action taken within ten working days following the complaint.

The **Management Committee** will ensure the following.

- If a complainant is not satisfied with the action taken by the Head teacher, then the chair of governors will hear the complaint. On receipt of the complaint the chair of governors will inform the Head teacher, investigate the complaint, and write to the complainant within ten working days, explaining the action taken.
- Where the complaint is against the Head teacher, the complainant may wish to contact the chair of governors first.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the chair of governors then a formal complaint may be made to the Management Committee through the Clerk to the Governors. Within 15 working days of receiving the written complaint a Complaints Committee made up from members of the Management Committee not previously involved, will meet to consider it. The complainant will be given seven working days' notice of the meeting, and may take a friend or other person to provide support at the meeting. Within seven days of that meeting the complainant will be informed of the decision, the reasons for it, and any action to be taken by the Cedars. The decision of the complaints committee is final.

- Where a complainant considers that the Cedars is not complying with the legal requirements of Local Authority policy in respect of a pupil's education then the LA can provide the complainant, the governors or the head with further advice.
- Where a complaint is about the Management Committee this can be referred to the LA. If that fails to produce a satisfactory response it can then be referred to the Secretary of State. If the complaint is upheld and the Management Committee fails to follow the directions of the Secretary of State, the judgement may be legally enforced.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

All complaints and the action taken will be documented and a summary included in the Head teacher's termly report to the governors, with advice on any implications for policies.

Complaints and Compliments procedures

Please complete this form and return it to Cedars who will then forward it to the Chair of the Management Committee. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

3. Telephone Number Home _____ Work _____

4. Name of Child _____

5. Details of the Complaint/Compliment (please include the date or period of time to which your complaint relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when).

6. Do you have a suggestion for change?

Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint such as letters or report.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Information for Parents

Compliments, Comments and Concerns

Cedars would like to hear from you if you:

- are happy with the service it provides and would like to compliment the staff and its pupils;
- have any suggestions about how Cedars can improve the quality of its provision;
- have a complaint or concern. All complaints will be taken seriously and given full and proper consideration.

Expressing Approval

When things go well, it is very helpful if parents express their approval. Maintenance of high levels of staff commitment, morale and motivation are essential to the provision of the best education for your child. Positive feedback really helps.

To express your approval you can write, telephone, e-mail or speak personally to staff concerned or the Head teacher. Your words will be appreciated.

Expressing Concerns

Your child's school is committed to providing a high quality service for your child. Sometimes things may seem to go wrong which may lead you to express concerns.

Any concerns should be raised with the member of staff concerned or the Head teacher in the first instance. If the Head teacher considers it appropriate another member of staff may be asked to respond because they have a particular responsibility or are familiar with the circumstances that have caused you concern. We hope that this would be sufficient to resolve the difficulty.

Making a Formal Complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve a difficulty **informally** then you can ask to use the formal complaints procedure.

- **Step 1 - the Head teacher**

Having discussed your concerns you may feel it necessary to inform the Head teacher that you wish to make a formal complaint. You can do this by telephoning, writing a letter or arranging an appointment to meet him/her. You will receive a written response.

- **Step 2 - the Management Committee**

If you are dissatisfied with the response you can make a formal complaint to the Management Committee. Cedars will provide you with a form that you can choose to fill in for this purpose.

The form will need to be sent to the Chair of Governors. Details of how the complaint will be investigated will be included with form.

You will receive a written response from the Management Committee.

When considering your complaint the chair of governors may seek advice from officers of Staffordshire Local Authority. However, you should not contact Staffordshire Local Authority or the Secretary of State for Education direct until Step 2 is complete.

- **Steps 3 and 4 - The role of Staffordshire Local Authority /Secretary of State for Education**

If you think that the governors have failed to consider your complaint properly and reasonably, you can raise the matter with the Staffordshire Local Authority or the Secretary of State for Education. **However, it is important to understand that this is not a general right of appeal for any parent who disagrees with the governors' decision.** If the governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither Staffordshire Local Authority nor the Secretary of State for Education can reverse their decision.

If you wish to raise the matter with Staffordshire Local Authority please write to:

Mark Sutton ~ Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

mark.sutton@staffordshire.gov.uk

Correspondence address:

Cabinet Office
Wedgwood Building
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

In your letter please explain:

- a) what your complaint to the governors was;
- b) what response they have made to it;
- c) why you think that the governors have not followed a proper procedure in considering your complaint, and/or;
- d) why you think that their consideration of it was unreasonable.

The Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People in Staffordshire may wish to meet with you but will, in any case, write to you to inform you of the further enquiries into your complaint.

If you remain dissatisfied with how the complaint has been dealt with you may wish to refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. Please write to:

The Secretary of State for Education,
Department for Education,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
London. SW1P 3BT

Note: This leaflet does not apply where the complaint may lead to disciplinary proceedings against a teacher or child protection procedures. These matters have separate procedures.