



# Carleton House

## Preparatory School

### **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**WRITTEN BY:**

Mrs Sandy Coleman

**DATE OF POLICY:**

September 2017

To be reviewed September 2019



## COMPLAINTS POLICY 2017

### MISSION STATEMENT

“We live, love and learn with Jesus”

This policy is applicable to the whole school, including the EYFS

Although few and far between the school is eager to resolve any complaints that parents may have about the school and to correct any deficiency or shortcoming as soon as possible. In order to help with this, the following procedure should be followed if parents have a complaint about the School.

The policy is available on the school website, or a paper copy can be requested. We aim to resolve any concerns or complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below. When we refer to ‘working days’ we mean Monday – Friday, when the School is open and during term time. This policy will deal with complaints from parents of pupils. This procedure also extends to the handling complaints from the public. Any reference to parents in this procedure includes the public.

The Head Teacher is responsible for the operation and management of the School complaints policy and procedures and should be informed of any initial discussion that takes place with parents.

Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

This policy describes a three stage process:

**Stage 1:** Informal raising of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to the Head Teacher or a member of staff

**Stage 2:** A formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors

**Stage 3:** A referral to the Complaints Panel

#### **Stage 1- Informal Complaint**

Initially parents should raise the complaint verbally, either in person or if this is not possible, by telephone. Depending upon the nature of the complaint this would normally be to the child’s class teacher or the Deputy Head. If this is not appropriate or the complaint has not been resolved to the parents’ satisfaction, then the complaint should be raised with the Head Teacher. This should be done by either arranging a meeting or by speaking to the Head Teacher on the telephone or writing to her. She may need some time to investigate but you would normally have a response within 48 hours, (during term time) even if it is just to update you as to the progress of the investigation. It is hoped that all complaints can be resolved at this stage.

#### **Stage 2- Formal Complaint**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis at stage 1, then the parents can proceed to stage 2. Parents should put their complaint in writing, stating that they wish the complaint to be dealt with as a formal complaint in line with the school’s complaint policy. The letter should include full details of the complaint and should be sent with all relevant documents and full contact details in an envelope addressed to the Head Teacher. In the case of the complaint being against the Head Teacher, the formal complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, Mr Peter Megann. The Head Teacher/ Chair of Governors will consider the complaint and decide upon the appropriate course of action.

The Head Teacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days. In most cases, the Head teacher will meet with or speak to the parents concerned within 3 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigations. The Deputy Head Teacher or another senior member of staff may be asked to act as investigating officer. The Head Teacher will keep confidential, written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to each complaint and the outcome.

Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed in writing. The Head Teacher will also give reasons for the decision. The Head Teacher will aim to inform parents of the outcome of the investigation within 15 working days of receipt of the letter of complaint. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of School holidays.

Complaints made by parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage will be investigated and the parents notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they can ask to proceed to Stage 3.

If no response is received after 10 working days the complaint will be considered closed.

### **Stage 3- Panel Hearing**

To request a hearing before the Complaints Panel the parents should inform the Head Teacher in writing, within seven working days of the decision complained of. The request will only be considered if Stages One and Two of the Complaints Procedure have been completed.

Parents are asked to ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details accompany the letter. Parents are asked to state in the letter the desired outcome and all grounds for the complaint. Parents are also asked to include a list of the documents which are believed to be in the possession of the School and which they wish the Panel to see.

The Head Teacher will acknowledge the request in writing within four working days. Should the complaint be regarding the Head Teacher the Parents should write to Mr Peter Megann, the "Chair of Governors" c/o the School marking the envelope "Private and Confidential".

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three individuals, who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the School.

Each member of the Panel will be appointed by the Governing body. A Panel hearing is a review of the process followed and the decisions taken by the Head Teacher. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The chair of the complaints Panel will acknowledge the formal letter of complaint and schedule a hearing to take place, normally within 10 working days. The Panel will not normally sit during school holidays.

The Chair will send parents written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than seven working days prior to the hearing.

Parents will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Copies of additional documents that parents wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk at least seven clear days prior to the hearing.

The Complaints Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint that has been made by considering:

- a. the documents provided by both parties and
- b. any representations made by parents and/or the Head teacher

If, after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that it is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these, or any other issues to the Head Teacher or to the full body of Governors as appropriate.

The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner. All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes. A member of the Panel will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.

The Chair will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

If possible the panel will resolve the parents' concern immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all the facts deemed relevant, the panel will form a decision and may make recommendations. After establishing the facts, if the Panel consider that the complaint is valid, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not valid, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the Parents and all relevant parties by electronic mail or postal letter within seven working days. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Governing Body and the Head Teacher. Reasons for the decision will be given.

### **Confidentiality**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Written records will be kept of all complaints from the formal stage, indicating whether they were resolved at stage 2 or stage 3. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. Correspondence, statements and records relating to a formal complaint will be stored securely for a minimum of six years.

### **Complaints Log**

All complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Log and, where referable to a pupil, also on the pupil's file. The Log shall contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Location of detailed file(s)
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome

The Complaints Log is entirely distinct from other files dealing with the complaint which may contain confidential information.

### **Resolution**

The School recognises and acknowledges Parents' entitlement to complain and we hope to work in partnership with parents in the best interests of the children in our care. In keeping with the school's aim of openness and fairness it is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

Parents of EYFS children will be notified of the outcome of an EYFS complaint within 28 days. Parents of children in the EYFS who, after following the complaints procedure, are still not satisfied have the right to complain to Ofsted on 0845 6014772 or The Independent Schools' Inspectorate can be contacted at CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, telephone: 020 7600 0100

### **Evaluation of the Complaints Procedure**

The School seeks to learn from any complaints whether justified or not to try to prevent any repetition. The Governors shall monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. If recommendations are made following a stage 3 panel hearing, these will be implemented and if appropriate policy and procedure adjusted accordingly.

There has been 1 formal complaint in the last academic school year

## **Carleton House Stage 3 Formal Complaint Panel Hearing Procedures**

### **Introduction:**

This is the procedure that will normally be followed by the Complaints Panel and is designed to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to present their views to the Panel.

### **Meeting format:**

The meeting will take the form of a "round the table" hearing, where all parties and the Panel are present in the same room throughout.

Present in the room throughout the hearing will be:

- The Panel Members
- The Clerk to the Panel (as agreed by the Panel). The Clerk will take notes of the meeting. Any notes produced by the Clerk will not be exact and will belong to the Chairperson.

The Chairperson can authorise the release of the Clerk's notes on condition that they remain confidential

- The parents who have made the complaint
- Any person that the parents have brought as a supporter
- The Head Teacher
- Any person that the Head Teacher has brought as a supporter who is not legally qualified, if agreed in advance by the Chairperson.
- Any other appropriate member of staff

Note: any witnesses called by any of the above parties may be asked to make their contribution and then leave rather than staying for the whole proceeding.

### **Suggested agenda**

1. Welcome and introductions by the Chairperson.
2. Parents present their complaints. Where two parents are present, it is often more helpful if one parent undertakes the responsibility of presentation.
3. The Panel and the Head teacher may ask questions of parents for clarification. Questions should be put through the Chair of the Panel who can intervene if s/he thinks that questions are inappropriate or are straying into cross examination.
4. The Head Teacher puts forward their case, explaining the reasons for the decision and consideration and calling witnesses if necessary.
5. The parents and Panel Members may ask questions of the Head teacher for clarification. Again such questions should be put through the Chair who can intervene as necessary.
6. The Head teacher is invited to make any further relevant points.
7. The parents are then invited to make any further relevant points.
8. When the Panel is satisfied that it has established facts sufficient for it to make its decision, the Chair may bring the hearing to a close and inform the parties that they will be notified in writing of the decision, normally within seven working days.
9. The parents and the Head teacher leave together with any witnesses, supporters or representatives.
10. The Panel retire to consider the complaint against the evidence provided. A decision is agreed by the Panel.

## **Carleton House Preparatory School**

### **Statement on Suspensions, Removal and Expulsion**

#### **General**

This statement is drafted to provide particulars of the School's policy on expulsions pursuant to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014. The statement also covers suspensions and removal of pupils from the School and should be read in conjunction with the discipline statement.

The statement does not attempt to cover the situations when suspension, removal or expulsion would be appropriate as each case is determined entirely on its own merits.

#### **Decision to Remove**

The Head Teacher can require Parents at any time to remove the pupil, without refund of fees, temporarily or permanently from the School if, after consultation with a Parent, he/she reasonably believes that the conduct or progress of the pupil has been unsatisfactory, or that the pupil is unwilling or unable to profit from the opportunities at the School, or a Parent has treated the School or members of its staff unreasonably (including non payment of fees) and in any such case removal is considered to be justified.

Any outstanding sums (including any fees) will be payable in full to the School within 28 days of the date the pupil leaves the School.

#### **Decision to Suspend or Expel**

The Head Teacher can suspend or expel a pupil at any time if he reasonably believes that the pupil has behaved in a manner (whether in or out of term time or on or off the School premises) which is a serious breach of the School Rules or damages the School's reputation. The Headmaster can also suspend a pupil pending or during any investigation into a breach of discipline. Such action will only be taken in serious circumstances. The manner and form of any announcement following expulsion shall be in the sole discretion of the Head Teacher.

There will be no refund of fees following either a suspension or an expulsion. In the event of expulsion all outstanding sums (including any fees) must be paid to the School within 28 days of the date the pupil leaves the School.