



## **Complaints Policy and Procedure 2024**

Hope Tree School strives to provide a good education for the children who attend. All staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents/carers and stakeholders.

However, we acknowledge from time to time, parents, carers and others connected with the school, will become aware of matters which cause them concern. To encourage resolution of such situations we have adopted the following complaints procedure which complies with part 7 of the Independent School Standards.

This complaints procedure, as required by law in paragraph 33 [Part 7 of the Independent School Standards) and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be made available on the school's website.

Complaints from parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) about the school's support are within the scope of the school's complaints procedure (this policy). Where parents/carers have specific complaints about their child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) procedures, or about the content of the EHCP, they will be referred to the Local Authority. This is in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice.

Wherever a concern or complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the Local Authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy which can be found on the school's website.

### **The difference between a concern and a complaint:**

- A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally (Stage 1), without the need to invoke formal procedures (Stages 2 & 3). We take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve any matter raised, as quickly as possible.

## **Who can make a complaint?**

- Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions).
- The complaints procedure does not apply to prospective students who have no right of complaint.

## **Complaints from Parents/Carers**

The procedures set out below only relate to complaints from parents of students, i.e. persons for whom education is being provided at the school. The process set out below does not cover complaints from parents of students who have left (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the student was still being educated at the school).

It is expected that complaints are made as soon as possible after an incident arises (although three months is generally considered to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint). The procedures below will be followed in the event of a complaint being made by parents or carers against the school (complaints are not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school).

## **Informal Complaint (Stage 1)**

- If you are concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at the school you should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with your child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All staff work hard to ensure that all students are happy at school, and are making good progress. We are always keen to know if there is a problem, so that we can take action before the problem seriously affects the student's welfare and/or progress. Teachers are available at the end of the school day or by appointment at other times.
- At any meeting/discussion, concerns will be listened to and then either an immediate response will be given (the issue will be resolved) or you will be invited to a second meeting/discussion to take place within 5 school days. This will give the school time to look into the matter more fully. At the second meeting/discussion a response will be given to concerns and you will be asked if you are satisfied with the school's response and any actions taken.
- If you are not satisfied with the result at this stage (1), you will be asked to write to/email the school within 10 school days a request to move to stage 2 of the complaints process.

## Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

- If a parent(s) or carer(s) are not satisfied with the response at Stage 1 they should write formally to the Head of Learning:
  - Rebecca Sands  
Hope Tree School  
Nursery House  
Manor Farm  
Impington  
CB24 9NG
- The Head of Learning will investigate the complaint further and respond in writing within 10 days (where further investigations are necessary that will exceed this time period, new time limits will be communicated with an explanation for the delay).
- The aim will always be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. The Head of Learning can make the following decisions:
  - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
  - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
  - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
  - Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not occur.
- If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 you should write to the school within 10 school days of getting the response. You will need to explain why you are not satisfied with the response and decide if you would like to take your complaint to the Complaints Panel.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Learning the complaint should be addressed to the Head of Pastoral Care. Please state the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve the complaint thus far and the action you would like to see taken to remedy your concerns. The Head of Pastoral Care will investigate and respond within 20 days. The complaint should be addressed to:
  - Fiona D'Arcy  
Hope Tree School  
Nursery House  
Manor Farm  
Impington  
CB24 9NG

### Formal Complaint (Stage 3)

- If you are not satisfied with the result, you may ask to refer your complaint to stage 3 of the procedure.
- At this stage, the Chair of the school's Advisory Board will meet with you to consider the complaint and make a final decision.
- The chair may take independent advice from professional bodies or seek to convene a panel of three members to consider the complaint.
  - In addition to the Chair of the Advisory Board, two additional panel members will be sought (e.g. an experienced governor/advisor from a different school)
  - At least one member of the panel will be independent of the running and management of the school (The member should not only be outside the school's workforce, and not a member of advisory board/proprietary body, but also should not be otherwise involved with the management of the school).
- The date of the panel meeting will take into account the availability of the parents or carers as well as the school and will take place within 30 days.
- You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence of the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also attend part of the meeting, accompanied by a friend or partner if wished, to put forward your case. The Head of Learning will be given the same opportunities.
- If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, the panel will meet in line with this policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing will be reasonable in order to facilitate the parent(s) exercising the right of attendance.
- The panel will write to you with its conclusion within 10 working days after the meeting.
- The panel's findings and recommendations will be made available to the complainant, Head of Learning and proprietors and where relevant the subject of the complaint
- The panel will keep a written record of all complaints and how they were resolved.
- The panel will ensure that all individual complaints are kept in the strictest confidence.

A written record of all complaints and their resolution, whether they proceeded to a panel hearing or not, will be kept on the schools recording systems by the Head of Learning (Equality Act 2010) and made available to the Proprietor and Ofsted inspectors on request.

The school will record the progress of any complaint and the final outcome. These records and any correspondence relating to a complaint will remain confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act 2002 requests access to the records.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be published on the school website.

## **Complaints from students:**

- The procedures below will be followed in the event of a student making a complaint against a member of staff, a fellow student or any other person within the school community.
- Students may wish to talk to an adult they trust about a situation relating to school or to a situation outside of school.
- Students are reminded that, although they may speak to any member of staff, there may be occasions where information will have to be referred to other agencies such as Children's Services.

Within school, students may talk to any member of staff about any concern they may have.

- A student may merely need a trusted adult to talk a situation through and may not be making a formal complaint. However,
- All actual complaints made by students will be recorded by the member of staff in the schools complaints log.
- The school response to the complaint will also be recorded. If the complaint is serious the student's parents/carers will be informed of both the complaint and the outcome. Some complaints will be referred to other agencies or to the Local Authority. If necessary, a meeting will be called to discuss the issues further.

A student may ask to speak to an adult from an outside agency. The school will, wherever possible, put the student in contact with a representative of the appropriate agency. The referral will be noted in the pupil's file.

If the complaint is an allegation against a member of staff then the school's safeguarding policy must be followed in addition to recording the complaint. Failure to follow this process may result in disciplinary action.

## **Social Media**

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, Hope Tree School requests the complainants do not discuss complaints publically via social media. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

## **Monitoring arrangements**

The Chair of the Advisory Board will check the procedures followed to ensure that all complaints are handled properly and effectively. The Head of Learning will track the number and nature of complaints looking at any trends of commonalities and how these could be used to inform future school provision and procedures.

The Advisory Board will check that complaints are handled according to the policy and consider the results of reviews of complaints and any changes made to school policies or procedures.

## Unreasonable Complainants

The school 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.

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

- maliciously or 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 consider minimising the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed.

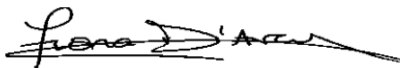
Whenever possible, the Head of Learning or the Head of Pastoral Care will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before considering the complaint unreasonable.

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 the school.

Signed:



Head of Learning



Head of Pastoral Care

Date: March 2024

Review Date: March 2025