Cedar Park School

Complaints and Resolutions Policy and Procedure

Date Approved by Governing Body: September 2026

Review date: September 2028

Introduction

The Governing Board of Cedar Park School has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints.

The complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including a member of the public, may raise a concern or make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concern or complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

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 defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The school takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any concern or complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Our procedure is underpinned by the following **framework of principles**: -

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Mediation may be useful in resolving a concern or complaint and may be offered at any point during the complaints procedure. Mediation will only be entered into with the agreement of all parties.

Timescales

A concern or complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will consider complaints made out of this time frame in exceptional circumstances.

Concerns or complaints raised outside of term time will be considered to have been raised on the first school day after the holiday period.

Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to issues concerning admissions, school re-organisation proposals, exclusion appeals, statutory assessments of special educational needs, matters raised by whistle-blowers, staff conduct complaints, grievances by school staff, complaints about collective worship, withdrawal from the curriculum or complaints about the curriculum. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures (details in Appendix 3); more information can be obtained from the school.

All other concerns and complaints will be handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below.

Raising Concerns

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity.

It is not appropriate to publicise any concerns you may have on social networking sites. Please speak, or write, to someone at the school at your earliest convenience, rather than using any other means.

Concerns or complaints should not be raised with individual governors. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering a formal complaint in the future.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues.

Stage 1 – Formal Procedure

Most concerns are resolved informally, however if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further by making a formal complaint you can let us know in person, by telephone or in writing.

The complaint form (Appendix 1) attached to this procedure can be helpful to complete. The aim of the form is to give us as clear an understanding as possible of your

complaint and includes a section on what actions you feel would resolve the problem. If you would like support in completing the form from someone unconnected with the complaint, please let us know and we would be happy to organise this for you.

If you are making your complaint in writing, it should be returned to the Headteacher (marked Private and Confidential) via the school office *unless:*

- The complaint is about the Headteacher. In this case it should be returned to the Chair of the Governing Board at the school address (marked Private and Confidential)
- The complaint is about the Chair of the Board, an individual governor or the whole Governing Board. In this case it should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board at the school address (marked Private and Confidential)

You will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your complaint within 5 school days.

An investigation will be carried out into the complaint and the way it has been handled by the school. This will include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary.

If the investigation is to be carried out by the Headteacher, they may delegate this to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Board (including the Chair of Vice-Chair) a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete the investigation.

If the complaint is about the Chair / Vice-Chair of Governors jointly, the whole Governing Board or the majority of the Governing Board, the investigation will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Board.

The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. If they are unable to meet this deadline, they will provide you with an update and revised response date.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

Stage 2 – Formal Procedure

Following the outcome of the investigation at Stage 1, if you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to move to Stage 2 of the formal procedure. You must let the school know if you wish to do this within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 1. Requests received out of this time frame will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

At this stage the complaint will be considered by the Governing Boards' Complaints Committee. This will be made up of a panel of three governors, who will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the Governing Board.

Panel members will have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with you. The meeting will normally take place within 15 school days of your request.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- The entire Governing Board or
- The majority of the Governing Board

The complaint will be heard by a panel of independent governors co-opted for this purpose.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting all parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If you are invited to attend the meeting, you will be contacted by the school to inform you of the date, time and venue of the meeting. Any further written material to be submitted to the committee will also be requested. If you reject the offer of three proposed meeting dates, without good reason, the school will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from all parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

If you attend the meeting, you may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage any party to bring legal representative to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and / or legal representation.

The meeting will be clerked by an independent clerk to the panel in the interests of all parties.

Appendix 2 outlines the process that will be followed at a panel meeting.

The committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.

<u>Outcome of the Panel Hearing</u>

The committee will write to you with its conclusion within 5 school days of the meeting, and its decision is final.

The committee can:

- Uphold your complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss your complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

An explanation of the committee's decision and any actions or recommendations will be detailed in the letter to you communicating the outcome of the complaints panel.

Next Steps

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Department for Education who can review whether the school has acted in accordance with the published complaints procedure and whether they have acted reasonably and lawfully.

The Department for Education can be contacted via: -

- National Helpline 0370 000 2288
- online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
- by writing to the Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Serial or Persistent Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. Unfortunately, in a small minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which is unacceptable or which can impede the investigation of their complaint. This can have significant resource issues for the school.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints, such as if the complainant:

- 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
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information and insists on it being taken into account and commented on
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues
- 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 adhered to
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated

contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is already being dealt with

- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before considering behaviour to be unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

Policy for Dealing with Complaints Campaigns

The school is committed to giving careful consideration to all concerns raised and complaints received. If the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected to the school, it may have become the focus of a complaints campaign. If the Headteacher and Chair of Governors' consider that this is the case a template response to the complaints will be sent.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Board monitors the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Complaints Procedure - Flowchart Summary

Concern Raised

Initial concern raised with a member of staff or the Headteacher

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No - Stage 1 – Formal Complaints Procedure

You can let us know in person, by telephone or in writing if your concerns have not been resolved and you would like to move to the formal stage of the Complaints Procedure.

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in *5* school days

Investigation

- By the Headteacher, Member of the SLT or Chair of the Governing Board
- By a nominated Governor if the complaint is about the Headteacher or a governor
- By an independent investigator if the complaint is about the Chair / Vice Chair of the Governing Board jointly, the whole Governing Board or the majority of the Governing Board

Investigation Outcome

Communicated within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No - Stage 2 – Formal Complaints Procedure

If you wish to take your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure you will be asked to confirm this within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 1.

Governing Board Complaints Committee Meeting

A panel of three governors will meet to consider your complaint within 15 school days. The committee meeting will be independently clerked.

If you wish to submit evidence to the panel you will be invited to do so in advance of the meeting.

Complaints Committee Decision

The panel will make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Board and will write to you within 5 school days.

You will be told whether the complaint has been upheld or dismissed and whether the panel have agreed any actions or made any recommendations.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No - You can contact the Department for Education if you feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.

Please complete and return to …….. (Headteacher/Chair of Governors/Clerk) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:

Please give concise details of your complaint, including any relevant dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to/write to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2: At the Panel Meeting

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors / Investigating Officer may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will then be invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher/Chair of Governors and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors is then invited to sum up the school's actions and respond to the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five school days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Clerk remains to support the panel.

Appendix 3: Areas Not Covered by These Procedures

	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. <link to school behaviour policy>.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistle-blowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

	Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
• Collective Worship	Complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship should be signposted to: - The Local Authority - The local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education