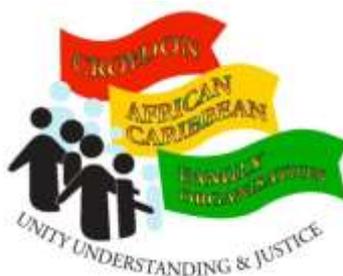


CACFO UK EDUCATION CENTRE



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: September 2021
Signature:	<i>Debra Douglas</i>	
Last reviewed on:	September 2021	
Next review due by:	September 2022	

Rationale

This complaints procedure aims to provide a structured opportunity to express and resolve concerns and to improve the service provided by the CACFO UK Education Centre.

CACFO UK Education Centre enjoys good relationships with parents, students and the community based on mutual respect and a willingness to listen to the views of others and to respond constructively.

At the Centre parents and students are encouraged to express their views on what goes on within the school in the spirit of true partnership between home, school and the community.

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions

4.3 Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

4.4 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

Complaint Procedure

Stage1. Informal

A parent or student may make an expression of concern to the school regarding any aspect of the service the centre delivers. At this stage the complainant is not seeking to make a formal complaint and is hoping that the matter can be resolved through an informal discussion. It is expected that all facts to do with the case are clarified by staff and any problems resolved through discussion. If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

Stage2. Formal

Concerns are raised with the Teacher-in-Charge. Parents may at this stage wish to have the Teacher-in-Charge to intervene to resolve the matter without a formal written complaint. The Teacher-in-Charge should conduct an investigation and the outcome should be communicated to complainant within 15 school days (if longer time is required this must be explained).

If the matter is unresolved the complainant may be asked to put their concern/issue in writing to the Teacher-in-Charge who should acknowledge within 2 days. Referral to the Teacher-in-Charge can occur if the subject is urgent or serious. The Teacher-in-Charge, if appropriate, can refer the matter immediately to the CACFO UK School's Governing Body.

Once a decision has been reached, the Teacher-in-Charge should ensure that the complainant is clear about the action taken and what to do if they remain unhappy.

Stage 3. Formal Complaint to the Teacher-in-Charge

Proceed to Stage 4 if the Teacher-in-Charge is the subject of the complaint. Complainant makes formal written complaint to the Head Teacher within 10 school days of the decision letter. The Teacher-in-charge must acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days. The Teacher-in-Charge conducts a formal investigation and outcome communicated in writing to complainant within 15 school days (explain if longer time is required).

Placing authorities are entitled to see all correspondence regarding complaints if the matter gets to this stage.

The written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this includes what action the school will take to resolve it.

Complainants must be provided with an explanation about the next stage of the procedure in case they remain unhappy.

Stage 4. The School's Governing Body

Complainant makes formal complaint to the CACFO UK School's Governing Body within 10 school days of the decision from the school. The Teacher-in-Charge should provide correspondence and background papers to Chair within 5 days of receipt.

The CACFO UK School's Governing Body should then consider the complaint within 15 working days. The Chair of the CACFO UK School's Governing Body should communicate the outcome within 7 working days from the meeting. Placing authorities are entitled to see all correspondence regarding complaints if the matter gets to this stage.

The written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this includes what action the CACFO UK School's Governing Body will take to resolve it.

Complainants must be provided with an explanation about the next stage of the procedure in case they remain unhappy. A provision should be made for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

Where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member should be independent of the management and running of the school. The parent should be allowed to attend and be accompanied at the panel hearing if they wish. The panel should be able to make findings and recommendations and these should be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and available for inspection by the proprietor and head teacher.

There should be a written record kept of all complaints that are made whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a

panel hearing and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State of a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding the school not meeting standards set by the DfE in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE:

- Education
- Pupil welfare and health and safety
- School premises
- Staff suitability
- Making information available to parents
- The spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of pupils

The DfE will consider reports of a major failure to meet the standards. Where appropriate, it can arrange an emergency inspection to look at pupil welfare and health and safety, and make sure that the school deals with serious failings.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law.

11. Learning lessons

The governing body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The governing body will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the headteacher.

This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher in consultation with the governing every 2-3 years in line with the DfE recommendations.

At each review, the policy will be approved by governing body.

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices