



CALDER LODGE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Calder Lodge School complaints procedures are clear, user friendly and readily accessible to the pupils, including those with disabilities. They address informal as well as formal complaints. Systems that do not promote open communication about 'minor' complaints will not be responsive to major ones, and a pattern of 'minor' complaints may indicate more deeply seated problems in management and culture that need to be addressed.

There is a complaints register that records all representations or complaints, the action taken to address them and the outcomes. Our pupils should genuinely be able to raise concerns and make suggestions for changes and improvements, which are taken seriously.

The complaints procedures are for children and young people, visiting and contact arrangements with social workers and Independent Visitors (for looked after children), as well as parents, guardians and advocacy and other services.

All new children, their parents and new staff are informed of the procedures as part of the induction process. A copy of the procedures will be supplied upon request to any of these persons / organisations. Children, upon admission to the School, will receive a child-friendly copy of the pupil handbook which covers the School's Complaint procedures. The Keyworker will ensure that the child knows how and feels able to complain about any aspect of the School. No action or reprisal will be taken against a child making a complaint or representation. Children may be accompanied by another person when making a complaint if support is needed.

Dealing with complaints involving another pupil or staff member – initial concerns

The staff need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases a member of staff will receive the first approach by the young person who may want to talk the situation through and not want to make a formal complaint. If appropriate, a restorative meeting will be arranged to help repair relationships between pupils or a staff member. In the event of any 'grumble' the pupil's parents / carers and Social Worker will be informed of the outcome.

Dealing with complaints involving another pupil or staff member – formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further and make a formal complaint. The Head Teacher will inform parents / carers and make a referral to Children's Services. If necessary, the Safeguarding Team would arrange a Strategy meeting. This would be to discuss the complaint further inviting the relevant Social Worker, a representative from school and any relevant agency. If the complaint was made against a staff member the LADO would be informed regarding the complaint by the Head Teacher.

All actual complaints made by pupils will be recorded in the Complaints Log and also Child Protection Log.

The Head Teacher is the nominated member of staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure.

Framework of principles

The Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be easily accessible and publicized.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- 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.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.
- Follow the sections on child protection and allegations of professional abuse, where appropriate.

Investigating complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Interview those involved in the matter and / or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist with the questioning.

- Keep notes of the interview.
- Refer to Children's Services dependent on findings following any investigation.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure the Head Teacher will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- Informal counselling.
- Initial practice review.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It is encouraged that complainants are to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better, is not the same as an admission of negligence.

The procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Time-limits

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. The Head Teacher will look to respond (where possible) within 24 hours and the complainant will be kept informed at each stage. LADO would be informed regarding the complaint when safeguarding issues are involved. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

The formal complaints procedure

The complaints procedure is defined in stages. At each stage it will be helpful to clarify exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the Head Teacher after a meeting with the complainant.

- At any point if a child or young person is satisfied with the outcome they will be invited to sign the entry in the Complaints book.
- If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the complainant should ask to see the Governor of Calder Lodge School.
- Any child or young person can ask at any time to see any Senior Manager.
- At any stage, if the child wishes, an Independent Person will be informed and invited to assist the child.

The stages of complaints

Three stages are:

- Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint).
- Stage two: complaint heard by Head Teacher.
- Stage three: complaint heard by Complaints Appeal Panel.

Regardless of these stages, an unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage. A complaints appeal panel consists of at least three people who were not directly involved in previous consideration of the complaint.

- Where a panel hearing is convened, one person on the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school. The Head Teacher is responsible for the appointment of the panel. The procedure must set out clear timescales for the management of the complaint i.e. providing adequate notice of the hearing etc.
- Parents / carers must be allowed to attend and be accompanied to a panel hearing if they wish.
- The panel is to make findings and recommendations, and ensure that the complainant, Head Teacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations.

Written records will be kept of all complaints and their outcomes, whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, when a complaint is submitted in writing or whether they proceed to a panel hearing. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints must be kept confidential but must be shown to HMI / OFSTED when requested when they inspect.

Recording of Complaints

It is useful for the school to record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, via email or in writing. It would be helpful if the member of staff ensured that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. The Head Teacher is responsible for the records and holds them centrally.

Dissemination

- When necessary a complaint that is substantiated after written evidence has been obtained may be brought to the notice of the appropriate authority (i.e. The Referring Authority and/ or Children Services/ OFSTED) and the Parents / carers.
- The written evidence must be made available to those children, staff and other appropriate persons concerned with the complaint.
- All complaints concerning Child Abuse or Allegations of Professional Abuse are brought immediately to the attention of Children Services and LADO and the Referring Authority by the Head Teacher.
- Information as to the number of formal, registered complaints will be made available for parents, guardians, inspectors and other interested persons.

Telephones

- Children and young persons are informed about CHILDLINE.
- The telephone numbers of Child Line; NSPCC are displayed and young people are informed of these.

Other Methods

Any young person, organisation or other persons have the right to pursue a complaint by other methods, e.g. by telephone or by writing a letter to an Independent Listener, OFSTED, an officer of the Referring Authority or another appropriate person within the organisation.

Complaints from Parents / Carers

The procedures below will be followed in the event of a complaint being made by parents or carers against the school.

- If parents or carers have a complaint against the school they may initially wish to contact the school informally either by telephone, by note or personally after making an appointment. The school will investigate the complaint and will respond with the outcome within five working days.
- If parents or carers are not satisfied with the response they should write formally to the Head Teacher. She/ he will investigate the complaint further and respond in writing (normally) within five working days. If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Proprietary Body; Calder Lodge School to the school address. This will be investigated and responded to (normally) within five working days.
- If the parents or carers are still not satisfied with the response they should inform the Head Teacher who will arrange a panel to hear the complaint. The panel will comprise of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the running and management of the school. The date of the panel meeting will be arranged to take account of the convenience of the parents or guardians as well as the school and will take place within a time limit of fifteen working days.
- Parents or carers will be invited to bring with them another person or persons to support them at the panel hearing if they wish.
- The panel will hear the complaint and will hear the outcome of the school's investigations and its response to these. The panel will then make findings and recommendations which will be communicated in writing (normally) within five working days to the Head Teacher, the parent or carer and, where appropriate, the person complained about.
- A written record of all complaints and their resolution will be kept. 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.

Monitoring

Calder Lodge will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where

necessary. As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the school may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and Calder Lodge can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

Publicising the Procedure

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. The Complaints Procedures is to be included in the:

- The school prospectus.
- The information given to new parents / carers, referring authorities when their children and young people join the school.
- The information given to the children themselves.
- School bulletins or newsletters.
- Documents supplied to volunteers and contractors.
- A specific complaints leaflet which includes a form on which a complaint can be made.
- Posters displayed in areas that will be used by the public, such as reception or the main entrance.
- The company website where used.