



'Improving the quality of family life'

Complaints Policy

At Snowflake School for pupils with autism, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be supported to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We believe that a close partnership between the school, parents and pupils is essential to ensure excellent pupil progress and well-being. In support of this, parents are invited to enter into a Home-School Agreement. This agreement sets out the school's aims and values, as well as the responsibilities of the school and parents, and our expectations for the pupils.

We recognise that, on occasions, concerns or difficulties may arise. In this event parents are encouraged to contact the school to have these difficulties or concerns resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Parents are reminded that the school will do its utmost to guarantee the confidentiality of any complainant and the substance of their complaints. The school will respect the views of a person who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a matter with a particular member of staff. Similarly, if a member of staff directly involved feels compromised then the matter may be referred to another member of staff to deal with.

Concerns should be raised with the school as soon as possible to allow for a proper investigation. Generally, if concerns are more than 6 months old, the school or the Trustees may consider this too late to take any action.

Please refer to timescales at the end of this document.

Stage 1 Informal discussion and complaints

Any member of the teaching staff may be contacted by a parent and asked to deal with a particular concern, incident or complaint. In most cases the tutor will receive the first approach. If the complaint is about an action of the tutor, this will be dealt with by the Head Teacher.

If the complaint is about an action of the Head Teacher, then the Trustees should deal with it at Stage 2 and 3.

The member of staff contacted must liaise with parents and must seek to resolve the matter in accordance with school guidelines - i.e. an informal meetings or telephone conversation arranged at the end of the school day in order that normal school hours are not interrupted. As soon as a complaint is received, the school will keep a record of all actions and decisions

Safe

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taken in response to the complaint. This will be recorded in a complaints book and will be used to review practice and consider any emerging patterns or trends that need attention.

It is important that the parent is informed of any delay in dealing with their concern or complaint. Once this stage has been concluded the parent will be notified of the outcome in writing. If the problem has not been resolved then the letter will explain the next stage of the process. This will be recorded in the school's Complaints Book (office) and will identify if they were resolved/how they were resolved.

If the matter is resolved no further action is taken and the matter is closed.

Stage 2 Formal complaints

If the parent indicates that they are unhappy with the above response and that the matter remains unresolved, a formal letter of complaint shall be sent to the Head Teacher (or a Trustee if the complaint is about the Head Teacher).

A meeting will be arranged at a mutually convenient time for all parties and those attending may be accompanied by a friend or supporter. This meeting will be chaired by the Head Teacher (or a Trustee). Full discussion will include soliciting the opinions and viewpoints of all concerned. The details of the complaint should be shared with all parties. It is hoped that an acceptable outcome, to the satisfaction of all involved, can be reached. Written records of all related meetings, telephone conversations and other documents will be retained and kept confidential to those concerned in the investigation. Minutes of the meeting will be made available.

Complaints from members of the public should be made directly to the Head Teacher and will be handled in a similar manner.

Should it prove impossible to resolve the complaint, the Head Teacher or the complainant can refer it to the Chair of the Trustees.

If the complaint is resolved no further action is taken and the matter is closed.

Stage 3 Consideration by the Trustees

Should it prove impossible to resolve the issue at stage 2 a further detailed letter of complaint should be sent to the Chair of Trustees who will then take the following action. No new complaint may be included.

The Chair of Trustees will convene the complaints review panel. The complaints review panel should consist of at least 3 people (i.e Trustees) who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Additionally, at least one person will be independent of the management and the running of the school (this person has already been identified by the Trustees and has agreed to act as the independent person should the need arise). The complainant, the Head Teacher and any member of staff about whom there are complaints will be invited to the meeting.

Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish.

The review panel will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The review panel will give a decision as soon as possible after the hearing and will confirm it in writing, along with the reasons for their decision. The letter will also explain the right of appeal to an external body if the complaint is not accepted.

The aim of the complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and to make recommendations, which will reassure all involved that the complaint has been taken seriously. All those involved in the complaints procedure – the Head Teacher, the complainant, the Chair of the Trustees and, where relevant, the person complained about – will be given copies of minutes and any findings and recommendations.

TIMESCALES

Stage 1

Parents are asked to address any issue as soon as possible. Letting matters continue can exacerbate difficulties.

The school will undertake to listen to complaints and will respond within 5 working days. A note will be kept.

Stage 2

A letter of formal complaint should be received by the Head Teacher (or the Chair of Human resources) within 20 working days of the initial complaint (stage 1).

A meeting between all parties will be arranged within 10 working days of receiving the letter. The school will undertake to respond formally within a further 5 working days of the meeting.

Stage 3

A detailed letter should be sent to the Chair of Trustees within 20 working days of the receipt of the school response to stage 2.

A full investigation will be made and a meeting arranged within 15 working days of receiving the letter. The meeting may agree to adjourn for a period of up to 20 working days. The school will undertake to respond formally within 15 working days of the meeting.

Note: All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential. The school will however provide parents and other interested parties with information about the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year.

Staff Complaints:

Staff complaints will be addressed as above. Complaints should firstly be discussed with the Head Teacher unless it concerns the Head Teacher *. In this instance it should be discussed with the Chair of Trustees.

***Please also refer to whistle blowing policy**

Complaints received 2021-22: **Zero**

Complaints received to date 2022-23: **Zero**

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