



Coopersale Hall School

Complaints Procedure - Main School and EYFS

Introduction

Coopersale Hall School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously concerns and complaints that they may raise. The Managing Principal and Headmistress are committed to providing the best educational experience they can for all pupils attending the school. They recognise the value to all concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any concern or complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions that a pupil or parent or other aggrieved person may have.

The school informs parents annually of the number of complaints made in the previous academic year.

Principles

The principles guiding the school's procedure for handling concerns or complaints are that it should:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action;
- keep people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation 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 leadership team so that services can be improved.

Complainants will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they require to be heard. It is important to the school that complainants have confidence in these procedures and know that their cases will be impartially investigated.

Complainants will be advised at the earliest possible stage of:

- the scope, if any for pursuing their concern or complaint
- the extent of the procedure for dealing with it
- the way in which the concern or complaint is likely to be handled.

Concerns and complaints will be dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible, adhering to the time limits laid down for response at each stage of the procedures.

Definition of a complaint

A 'complaint', within the terms of the procedures described here is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school but not being employed at the school, about the standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff, or about the conduct, actions or omissions of members of the teaching or non-teaching staff employed at the school.

Stage One: Informal Resolution of a Concern (Normally addressed to the child's teacher)

Parents should contact their child's teacher in the first instance in person, by email, by telephone or by letter. The teacher will make a written record of the concern. The teacher will have a duty to inform the Headmistress if any issue is not resolved after discussion with the complainant. All concerns, however received, will be reported to the Headmistress.

If the concern is about the child's teacher then the parents may wish to contact the Headmistress. The Headmistress may refer the concern to a senior member of staff to act as the 'concern coordinator' who will attempt to resolve the matter. If the concern is about the Headmistress they should address it directly to the Managing Principal.

Should the outcome not be resolved to the parents' satisfaction within 5 working days of the start of the informal process, parents may wish to proceed with a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution of a Complaint (Normally addressed to the Headmistress)

If it has not been possible to achieve an informal resolution of the concern acceptable to the complainant, the complainant will be given a copy of this Complaints Procedure and encouraged to make a formal complaint in writing to the Headmistress. The complaint should include full details, including names and dates where appropriate.

The Headmistress will investigate any written complaints and notify the complainants of the outcome within 28 days of having received the complaint. If there is any delay, such as for a school holiday period, she will advise you accordingly.

To investigate, the Headmistress will speak to all people involved in the cause of the complaint in order to establish the facts. Initially, those involved will be interviewed separately. If there are discrepancies in the evidence given, the Headmistress may decide to call several people together in order to investigate further.

As part of the investigation the Headmistress will offer the complainant an interview, at which the complainant will be able to set out fully the grounds for the complaint. It may be necessary to investigate further following the interview. The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews, and will enter details about the complaint into the school's Complaints Log.

The Headmistress will inform the complainant in writing of the conclusion to the investigation to inform them of the outcome and any resulting action she proposes to take. The Headmistress will record in the school's Complaints Log if the complaint has been resolved at this stage.

Although this should typically resolve the complaint, the option is available for the complainant to refer the complaint to the Stage Three if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Complaint about the Headmistress

If the Complaint is about the Headmistress, the complainant should write to the Managing Principal. The Managing Principal may delegate the Head of one of the other Oak-Tree Schools and the Group Bursar to investigate the Complaint fully within 10 working days and offer the complainant an interview to set out fully the grounds for the complaint.

In this case the Oak-Tree Head and Group Bursar will inform the complainant in writing within 10 working days of the conclusion to the investigation including the outcome and any resulting action to be taken. The Complaint will be recorded in the school's Complaints Log if the complaint has been resolved at this stage.

Stage Three: Complaint to the Governing Body (Addressed to the Managing Principal)

If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of the previous stage, a letter should be sent to the Managing Principal setting out the grounds for the complaint in writing.

The Managing Principal will convene a panel of three people normally consisting of himself, a Head from another school not directly involved in the matters that are subject to complaint and a neutral person of good standing within the community not directly connected with the school.

The Panel will call for a full report from the Headmistress and, if necessary, obtain further particulars about the matter. The Panel will examine the complaint fully before responding. The complainant will be invited, with a relative, teacher or friend, to a meeting that should take place within 10 days of the complaint being made within Stage Three. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Headmistress may be invited to attend the meeting in order to clarify the facts about the previous investigation.

After due consideration of all the relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and make recommendations that shall be completed within 10 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the complainant, the Headmistress and the person who is the subject of the complaint informing them of its decisions and the reasons for them. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Further Stages

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with a decision made by the Panel they will be able to pursue their complaint with the Department for Education and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

- The address of the Department for Education is Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road, Darlington, DL3 9BG.
- The address for the Independent Schools Inspectorate is CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, telephone 020 7600 0100.
- The address for Ofsted for any Early Years concerns is Ofsted, National Business Unit, Royal Exchange Buildings, St. Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA, telephone 08456 404040.

Records

The panel will ensure that written records of all complaints made at this stage are kept in the Complaints Log for at least three years, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint will be recorded and kept regardless of whether it has been upheld.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Managing Principal and Headmistress.

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

Contacting the Managing Principal

The Managing Principal may be contacted by writing to: Mr Matthew Hagger, Oak-Tree Schools, 6-8 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA or through the email address info@oaktreeschools.co.uk.