

# Complaints Policy and Procedures

## Background

Open Box Education Centre is committed to taking complaints and concerns seriously and at the earliest stage. However, in those instances where a Parent or Carer doesn't feel a concern has been addressed, or it is of sufficient gravity, then the formal complaints procedure should be used. This Policy is available to parents and carers and to parents and carers of prospective students, on request.

Under the terms of this policy, a concern and a complaint are taken to mean any matter about which a parent/carers of a student is unhappy and seeks action by the School.

The School aims to ensure that all concerns and complaints are managed sympathetically, efficiently, as timely as possible, at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible.

It is always the intention to settle any concerns or complaints before they reach the formal stage (from Stage 2 onwards). Additionally, comments (both concerns and compliments) can be made by parents, carers and students at each termly progress review meeting on the parent and student feedback forms.

The School will try to resolve every concern and complaint in a positive way, with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, the School will review its systems and procedures in light of the circumstances of the complaint.

The School recognises that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and so the School needs to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents/carers and students should never feel that making a complaint will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at School.

## **The School's Complaints Procedure has Four Stages.**

### **Stage 1:- Dealing with initial concerns/complaints raised informally with any member of Staff**

All staff who are made aware of a concern or complaint will notify the Principal of the matter, at the earliest opportunity, having listened carefully and sympathetically to the details and reason for the concern. If it is possible to address the concern quickly and easily, without having to seek advice or authorisation, then the member of staff will respond accordingly, explaining that they understand the problem and what they can do to rectify it (given the nature of the concern).

Concerns can be raised with any member of staff at any time, and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case there will be an informal but informed response within two working days. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, but a record of the matter will be made and sent to the Principal by the member of staff. It is anticipated that the vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way within stage one.

**Stage 2:- If not resolved at Stage 1, a formal written complaint should be sent to the Principal (or The Chair of Governors, if the complaint is about the Principal).**

If a Parent or Carer is dissatisfied with the response to the concern or complaint raised at Stage 1, the complaint should be escalated to Stage 2. Full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details to the Principal. Where the complaint concerns the Principal, it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors.

The complaint will be logged by the Principal, including the date it was received. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, by either telephone or email, within two working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the Principal has taken to resolve the issue and may also include suggestions for a change in procedure. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within five working days of the receipt of the formal complaint but in any case, within no more than ten working days.

The Principal will keep written records of all investigations, interviews with staff and meeting notes gathered in relation to the complaint. Following the meeting, the Principal will email or write to the Parent/Carer, with details of the findings and decision on the complaint, within 10 working days. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the Principal will notify the Parent/Carer of this and the new timescale proposed.

If the Parent/Carer is dissatisfied with the Principal's response or any decision or finding of fact made in relation to the complaint, the Parent/Carer can request that the complaint be progressed to Stage 3.

N.B. If the Stage 2 complaint concerns the Principal, and is sent to the Chair of Governors directly, the response times for acknowledgement and action taken, including arranging meetings, will follow the same service level timescales set out for the Principal to action at this stage. The Chair of Governors will also keep written records of all investigations, interviews with staff and meeting notes gathered in relation to the complaint.

**Stage 3:- If the matter is not resolved at Stage 2, a formal written complaint should be sent to the Chair of Governors.**

If a Parent or Carer is dissatisfied with the response to the concern or complaint raised at Stage 2, the complaint should be escalated to Stage 3. Full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details to the Chair of Governors.

The complaint will be logged by the Chair of Governors, including the date it was received. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, by email, within two working days of receiving it. The Chair of Governors will assign one of the members of the Governing Body to further assess and investigate the complaint. The Governor will respond to the Parent/Carer in writing, on the action that has been taken to resolve the issue, and may also include details of suggestions for a change in procedure, within 10 working days from receipt of the Stage 3 formal written complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the Governor will notify the Parent/Carer of this and the new timescale proposed.

If the Parent/Carer is dissatisfied with the Governor's response or any decision or finding of fact in relation to the complaint, the Parent/Carer can request that the complaint be progressed to Stage 4.

**Stage 4:- If the matter is not resolved at Stage 3, a formal written complaint should be sent to the Chair of Governors, to request a Panel Hearing.**

If a Parent or Carer is dissatisfied with the response to the concern or complaint raised at Stage 3, the complaint should be escalated to Stage 4. Full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents to the Chair of Governors, requesting a Panel Hearing.

The escalation request will be logged by the Chair of Governors, including the date it was received. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by email, within two working days of receiving it. The Chair of Governors will arrange a Panel Hearing, made up of at least three people who are not/have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of the complaint's panellists will be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel hearing will be arranged within 15 working days of receipt of the Stage 4 complaint.

The Chair of Governors will circulate a copy of the paperwork/documents to be considered by the Complaints Panel, to all parties involved in the hearing, at least three working days prior to the Panel Hearing.

The Parent/Carer will be permitted to attend the panel hearing and can be accompanied at the hearing, if they wish. There will be no right on behalf of the Parent/Carer to object to the panel members, as long as the panel has been correctly composed according to the details above.

The panel hearing will make findings and recommendations and a copy of these findings and recommendations will be provided to the Parent/Carer, and where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Members and the Principal.

### **The Decision**

The decision, findings and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the Parent/Carer within 5 working days of the Hearing.

The decision of the panel hearing at Stage 4 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

### **Notes to this policy:-**

1. A working day means a full school day, during term time only and will not include any training days or academic review days in the School's term dates calendar.
2. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as it is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.
3. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority.
4. Written records will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the initial stage, or proceed through to Stage 4.

## Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Board of Governors 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. Preferably, complaints information shared with the Board of Governors will not name individuals.

**Approved by:** ..... (Principal) .....(date)

**Authorised by:**..... (Chair of Governors) .....(date)

**To be reviewed every:** 3 years

**Next review date:** July 2024

Date of Review	Reviewed by	Ratified by Governors	Date of next review
6 <sup>th</sup> October 2021 Version 1.2	Alison Dolan/Marie Black	01-02-22	July 2024