

TRANSFORM TRUST



Complaints Procedure

September 2017

Transform Trust strives to be a school community where everyone:

- *Has high aspirations and expectations;*
- *Enjoys, and is excited by, high-quality learning;*
- *Has skills, attitudes and knowledge to equip them for their future;*
- *Values themselves and others equally;*
- *Performs to the best of their ability.*

Aims of this policy

This policy statement sets out the school's approach to dealing with parental concerns and complaints that have exhausted local school procedures.. Further details of how we handle them are contained in our procedures document; see *Appendix 1*.

- We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
- We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the trust's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community or Trust. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.
- These procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
- Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to close a complaint when all procedures have been exhausted.
- The Government advocates the resolution of parental concerns and complaints at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations.

Appendix 1

Our procedures for dealing with general concerns

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures.

The procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through contact at the appropriate level in school using local procedures.

Stage 2 is the next stage where Chair of Governors attempts to resolve the concern.

Stage 3 is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Trust

Stage 4 is the next stage once Stage 2 has been worked through. It involves a complaints review panel of Trust members.

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

Stage 1 – Your initial contact with the school

Many concerns will be dealt with following the procedures laid out in each school. The school is always the first point of contact, and this can be either a teacher, or in some cases the Headteacher. Every attempt must be made to resolve a complaint to everyone's satisfaction at this stage.

Stage 2 – Your contact with the Governing Body

If, after stage 1, the complaint has not been resolved, the complaint is to be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors for William Booth Primary and Nursery School is Steve Oakley and can be contacted by email – Steve.Oakley@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Stage 3 - Formal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints after Stage 1 has been exhausted. It applies where each party cannot resolve a complaint at Stage 1.

1. The written complaint should be addressed to the CEO, Transform Trust, c/o the Clerk, Claire Smith (claire.smith@transformtrust.co.uk)
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within three working days.
3. We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement.
4. The CEO will nominate a lead investigating officer.
5. We would expect the investigating officer to respond in full within 20 working days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.
6. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you

wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.

7. The investigating officer may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
8. Following the meeting, the investigating officer will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
9. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or carer not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
10. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
11. The investigating officer will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
12. The investigating Officer will report findings to a complaints panel, whereupon a decision will be made in respect of the complaint.
13. The panel will be made up of 2 Governors from the school and one person who is independent of the management or the running of the school (i.e. a Governor from another school or someone not connected to education).
14. Once the panel has established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
15. It may be decided that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. Please see the next page for further information about this process.
16. If we do not close the complaint after Stage 2, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3, as described below.

Closure of complaints

- Very occasionally, a school will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.
- We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of 'agreeing to disagree'.

- If a complainant persists in making representations to the school or the Trust - this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.
- For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint.
- In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage 3 of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be confident that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint.

The CEO may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not help to move things forward.

Stage 4 - Consideration by a complaints review panel

If your concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, we may agree to set up a complaints review panel to consider it. This is a formal process, and your ultimate recourse at this level. The CEO has discretion to agree to this form of meeting where she feels it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.

The purpose of this arrangement is to give your complaint a hearing in front of a panel who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent. We recognise, however, that it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken your complaint seriously.

The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The clerk to the Trust will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 working days.
2. The clerk will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint. You can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if you wish.
3. The original panel that hear the case will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel.

4. The clerk will inform you and any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least five working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting.
5. With the letter, the clerk will send you all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint and ask whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel.
6. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and the clerk will also inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
7. With the agreement of the chair of the panel, the CEO may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting,
8. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
9. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
10. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.
11. Normally, the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.
12. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - you to explain your complaint;
 - you to hear the school's response from the Headteacher;
 - you to hear the Trust's initial response from the CEO;
 - you to question the CEO about the complaint;
 - you to be questioned by the CEO about the complaint;

- the panel members to be able to question you and the CEO;
 - any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
 - you and the CEO to make a final statement.
13. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the CEO and yourself within two weeks. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
14. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
15. The clerk will send you and the CEO a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within two weeks. The letter will explain what further recourse, beyond the governing body, is available to you.
16. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

Other sources of information and advice

If your concern is about an aspect of special needs provision, which might include information about relevant voluntary organisations and support groups in Nottingham, you might like to talk to the Parent Partnership team on their helpline: 0115 948 2888.

You may also write to the DfE if you are dissatisfied about the way an academy has handled your complaint they should contact the DfE either:-

Via the Department for Education's schools complaints form which is available on the GOV.UK website

By post to Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.