COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE NURTURE EDUCATION TRUST

Policy Owner: Mark Anderson

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Next review date: 01/10/2027

Nurture Education Trust's aim is to resolve every concern or complaint informally, quickly and fairly to all those concerned. If a matter cannot be resolved informally, the matter may proceed as a formal complaint. The complaints procedure only applies to parents and carers of current students, save for where a complaint was commenced prior to a student leaving the school.

Timescales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply. Further timescales for each stage are detailed below. The example form in Appendix A should be used where possible when opting to make a complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If you have a concern or complaint, this should be addressed initially to a member of the senior leadership team via the main number. It is hoped that the matter will be resolved at this stage.

If your complaint relates to the SEN provision for your child, your complaint should be addressed to the SEN Manager at this stage.

If the complaint is against the teacher or member of support staff you should address your complaint to the Head of Centre.

If the complaint is against the Head of Centre, you should address your complaint to a Deputy Head of Centre.

A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be kept by Nurture Education Trust. The record is held centrally on Microsoft Teams in the Managing Complaints folder.

We aim to resolve complaints on an informal basis within 10 working days during term time. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or as soon as reasonably practicable during holidays, or where you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint raised informally, you may proceed with a formal complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then you may put your complaint in writing to a senior member of staff. You may forward your complaint via letter or e-mail to the Head of Centre and should where possible use Appendix A as a guide. A senior member of staff will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

A senior member of staff delegated by the Head of Centre may investigate all written complaints.

In most cases, the senior member of staff will either meet with or speak with you, if this is a suitable response to the complaint, normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint or as soon as reasonably practicable during holidays, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Once the senior member of staff is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. You will be informed of this decision in writing together with reasons for the decision as soon as reasonably practicable (and normally within 20 working days of receipt of the written complaint). Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept by Nurture Education Trust.

If you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with the formal resolution stage, you should proceed to Stage 3 of this complaints procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If you wish to progress your complaint to stage 3, you must write to the Head of Centre setting out in full the details of the complaint within 10 working days of receiving the stage 2 decision, or immediately after receiving the stage 2 decision if the complaint is against a senior member of staff. Your letter or email should give full details of the complaint and enclose all supporting documents.

A request for a panel hearing will normally only be considered if you have invoked stage 1 and 2, however if the complaint is against a senior member of staff, you may reserve the right to invoke stage 3 immediately.

The Head of Centre will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a panel hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint or as soon as reasonably practicable during holidays. The panel will not consider any new complaints that have not been raised as part of the initial complaint at stage 1 and 2.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Head of Centre and consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Head of Centre will ensure that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. Parents and carers may be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish.

Efforts will be made to conduct the panel hearing at a time and location which is accessible to the complainant. If the complainant does not wish to attend the panel hearing the hearing will still go ahead.

After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the Complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 10 working days. If the Panel deems it necessary, the Head of Centre will arrange for the complaint to be further investigated. The Head of Centre will inform you and a revised response date will be set. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise confirmed in writing to you, the senior member of staff, the Head of Centre and, where relevant, the person complained of. The Panel's decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on Nurture Education Trust premises by the Head of Centre.

Recording Complaints

A written record (see Appendix B - which will be kept for at least three years) will be kept of all complaints in the Microsoft Teams 'Managing Complaints File' and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage (stage 2) or proceeded to a panel hearing (stage 3). The record will state what action/'[s], if any, were taken in respect of the complaint, even if the complaint was not upheld. The Head of Centre will review this record of formal complaints at least annually. In addition, a separate log of all informal complaints will be kept on site. This will be reviewed periodically by the SLT to identify patterns and trends. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.

The School will provide ISI, upon request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action taken and conclusion reached.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be retained only for as long as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

You can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with us. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unreasonable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Nurture Education Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with us, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);

- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, e-mail or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head of Centre or a senior member of staff will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Head of Centre will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Nurture Education Trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed stage 2. The Department for Education will consider any reports of a *major failure* to meet standards of education, pupil welfare and health and safety, school premises, staff suitability, making information available to parents, spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of students and request ISI to identify whether Nurture Education Trust has adhered to the education legislation and any standards set by the Department for Education in these fields. The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact_the_Department_for_Education

Appendix A - Complaint Form

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to <…Name> (*either Head of Centre/ Chair of Trustees– school to delete as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the Pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix B – Formal Complaints Record

Complaint Number	Date Received	Complainant	Date of Acknowledgment	Name of Investigator	Date Formal response given	Date of Appeal	Date of Acknowledgment	Date of Appeal Meeting	Complaint upheld: Yes/No
