



# Cambridge Primary Education Trust (CPET)

## Complaints Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Schools within The Cambridge Primary Education Trust strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Executive Principal, along with the School Advisory Boards, Headteachers and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the Trust is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the Trust follows in such cases.
- 1.2 If any parents/carers are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to make an appointment to talk to the child's Class Teacher immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. We take informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints.
- 1.3 Parents/carers should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.
- 1.4 This policy is available from the school office and will be published on our website as well as referred to in our prospectus.

### 2. Aims

- 2.1 CPET aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concern or complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved within established time limits.

### 3. Raising a concern or complaint

<p><b>Informal stage</b> <i>Expression of concern made to the school.</i></p>	<p>If a parent or carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at any of our schools, they should, in the first instance, make an appointment to discuss the matter with their child's Class Teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. Most issues can be resolved on the spot with apologies where necessary.</p> <p>It may be appropriate, in some instances, to involve members of the school's Senior Leadership Team at this stage.</p>
<p><b>Stage 1 – Formal complaint to Headteacher</b> <i>Concern raised formally as a complaint.</i></p>	<p>Please note that collecting details accurately surrounding a complaint always takes time. An appointment should be made at the School Office to discuss your complaint.</p> <p>The Headteacher will consider any complaint very seriously and shall investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The outcome of the Headteacher investigation will be communicated to you in writing <b>within 15 school days</b>.</p>

<p><b>Stage 2 – Appeal to the Chair of the School Advisory Board</b></p>	<p>Should you be unhappy with the outcome of Stage one, you have a right to appeal to the Chair of the School Advisory Board.</p> <p>Complaints at this stage should be written and received <b>within 10 school days</b> of the Headteacher's decision. Your appeal should be addressed to the Chair of the School Advisory Board by a letter delivered to the school, addressed and marked "private and confidential", and should set out clearly why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen.</p> <p>The Chair of the School Advisory Board (who will not have previously been involved in your complaint) will consider the case and will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. The Chair of the School Advisory Board will make a decision and write to you within <b>15 school days</b>.</p>
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<p><b>Stage 3 - Executive Principal. (where identified as appropriate at this stage)</b>  <i>Complaints should be written to the Executive Principals PA under private and confidential cover.</i></p>	<p>Should you remain unhappy, then there may be instances where the complaint will be most appropriately investigated by the Executive Principal.</p> <p>Complaints at this stage should be written and received within <b>10 school days</b> of the Chair of the School Advisory Board’s decision. Your letter should be addressed to the Executive Principal (marked “private and confidential” and ‘for the attention of the Executive Principals PA’) and within it, should set out why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen.</p> <p>The Executive Principal (who will not have previously been involved in your complaint) will consider the case and will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. The Executive Principal will make the decision in private and write to you within <b>15 school days</b>.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4 - Trustees of Cambridge Primary Education Trust</b></p> <p><i>You may take your complaint to the Trustees of Cambridge Primary Education Trust <b>within 30 school days</b> of the Executive Principal’s response. Please send to the Clerk to the Trust.</i></p>	<p>If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent/carer may make representation to the CPET Trustee complaints panel clearly outlining their reasons for appealing, and offering recommendations for what they feel could resolve the situation.</p> <p>This must be addressed to the Chair of the Trust by a letter delivered to any of the Trust’s schools, addressed and marked “private and confidential”, and highlighting ‘formal complaint’, to ensure the matter is dealt with promptly. It is a matter for the panel of Trustees to determine whether a review will be carried out based on the information supplied. If the Trustees consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a panel of 3 Trustees. You may be accompanied by a companion at the meeting should you wish. This may be a relative, teacher, or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Please notify the Clerk in writing who you would like to attend with you.</p> <p>The Trustees will ensure that where there is a panel hearing, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. An outcome, along with any recommendations will be provided to all relevant parties <b>within 15 school days</b> where possible.</p>

<p><b>Further representation</b></p> <p><i>If you still remain dissatisfied you may make further representations.</i></p>	<p>You may approach the Secretary of State for Education or the Ombudsman if you are unhappy with the process or outcome. This would normally only be appropriate if you believe that the school, the Governing body and the LA have acted illegally or arbitrarily.</p> <p><i>* Please note the Ombudsman does not investigate internal school management</i></p>
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**3.1** Should any parents/carers have a complaint about Headteachers or the Executive Principal, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Trust (as at stage 4 above) who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents/carers are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

**3.2** In the case of a vexatious complaint where despite all stages of this policy being followed the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Trust is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**3.3** An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

#### **4. Investigating complaints**

**4.1** It is suggested that at each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required.
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes.
- Ensure they adhere to appropriate time scales wherever possible.

## **5. Resolving complaints**

- 5.1** At each stage in the complaint schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
- An apology;
  - An explanation;
  - An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
  - An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
  - An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released;
  - An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
  - An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
  - An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.
- 5.2** An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

## **6. Monitoring and review**

- 6.1** The Trustees monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteachers log all Stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These logs are presented to the School Advisory Board as part of the Headteachers' report.
- 6.2** Trustees take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- 6.3** This policy is reviewed as necessary at meetings of Trustees of CPET.