



Complaints Policy
2020/2021


COMPLAINTS POLICY ISSUES AND UPDATES

Pages	Issue No.	Date
Whole Document - new format and template used.	1	January 2016
Cover page - logo	2	February 2016
Whole document - checked and revised where necessary	3	August 2016
Process - points 2.4-2.6 amended	4	April 2017
Whole document - annual review and revised where necessary	5	September 2017
Whole document - annual review	6	August 2018
Whole document - annual review	7	August 2019
Whole document - annual review and logo change	8	August 2020

The following policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team and the Executive Team.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis unless circumstances arise requiring the policy to be reviewed earlier.

Approved by Executive Team: August 2020

Board signatory: 

Planned review: August 2021

1. Policy Overview

- 1.1 The majority of issues raised by parents/carers, members of the public, employers or students, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. To enable us to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than 1 year it will not be investigated.

We aim to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by Progress Schools.

All complaints are upheld and the policy revised where necessary based on the review on the complaints tracker. Any outcomes which require Progress Schools to review additional policies and/or procedures will be completed swiftly with notification to all staff.

2. Process for School Based Complaints

- 2.1 The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Complaints Policy has four main stages:

- Stage 1 - A concern is raised informally with a staff member.
- Stage 2 - Formal complaint is heard by the Head of School.
- Stage 3 - Formal complaint is passed to the Senior Leadership Team who will seek advice from The Executive Team before either responding or recruiting an external to carry out an investigation
- Stage 4 - Complaint is heard by a member of the Executive Team
- Stage 5 - Complaint is heard by the CEO of Progress Schools

This is the policy and procedure for complaints. If the complaint/appeal relates to a fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion, the details of who to write to or appeal to will be documented on the exclusion letter.

- 2.2 Stage 1 - Raising a concern:

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, usually by telephone or email, which will resolve the concern. We request that parents/carers make their first contact with a member of staff or the Head of School. If the complaint is in relation to the Head of School, we request that the Regional Operations Manager (Head Teacher) is contacted.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the Head of School within 10 working days. We will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Any staff member that takes responsibility for dealing with a concern will ensure the Head of School is aware, even if resolution is achieved. Complaints from stage 2 onwards are logged on the complaints tracker.

Throughout the process outlined below, the complaint and resulting actions will be monitored by Charlotte Barton.

2.3 Stage 2 - Complaint heard by the Head of School:

The member of staff receiving and logging the complaint will report it to the Head of School to follow up or the Head of School will investigate if the parent/carer has contacted them directly. If the complainant is not satisfied, they can be advised to write a formal complaint, addressed to the Senior Leadership Team at the school address.

The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. We will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action that we have taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 working days of getting our response. You will need to tell us why you are still not satisfied and what you would like us to do.

2.4 Stage 3 - Formal complaint is passed to the Senior Leadership Team who will instruct an external source to carry out an investigation or respond.

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complaint will be passed on to the Senior Leadership Team by the Head of School at your request. The Senior Leadership Team will then instruct an external partner/source to complete a full, unbiased investigation. Following the investigation, the external partner/source will normally give a written response within 10 working days via the Senior Leadership Team. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you should let Progress Schools know within 10 working days of getting the response.

2.5 Stage 4 - Complaint heard by a member of the Executive Team.

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the Progress Schools Executive Team giving details of the complaint. The Executive Team will go over all evidence and investigation outcomes before providing a response and/or additional actions carried out to resolve the complaint. The further investigation will normally take place within 7 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation. Any letter addressed to the Executive Team should be addressed to: Progress Schools Head Office, Switch House, Northern Perimeter Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L30 7PT.

2.6 Stage 5 - Complaint heard by the CEO of Progress Schools

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the Progress Schools Chief Executive Officer giving details of why you are not happy with previous outcomes. The Chief Executive Officer will convene a complaints panel hearing with at least 1 Director and an external if it cannot be resolved by the CEO alone. The hearing will normally take place within 10 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation.

The aim of the appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between Progress Schools and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 3 working days after the date of the panel hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

2.7 Panel Hearings:

Where it has been necessary to convene a panel hearing for a complaint, a person independent of the management and running of the Progress Schools organisation will be appointed to the panel (usually drawn from the relevant referring agency of the complainant) to act as an independent advisor and mediator if required. The other members of the panel will be appointed by the CEO and consist of at least 1 member from the Progress Schools Governing Board of Directors who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The panel hearing allows for parents/carers to be in attendance (if they wish) and to be accompanied by another person for supportive purposes only.

2.8 Findings & Recommendations:

The panel hearings are intended to make findings and recommendations that will be sent using electronic mail or given to the complainant in the form of a letter and where relevant, to the person(s) complained about.

2.9 Written Records:

A written record will be kept of all complaints made at all stages of the complaints process (from the preliminary stage to panel hearing). Records and the complaints log will indicate whether complaints have been resolved at the preliminary stages or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidentially secured on the school premises available for inspection by the proprietor and the Head Teacher or a body conducting an inspection (referring agencies, Local Authority) and governmental bodies (Secretary of State) who require access to them. Additional copies will be held electronically to ensure evidence is available at all times.

N.B. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Head Teacher, the Head Teacher will be informed of the complaint. The CEO will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Progress Schools Directors, the Director will be informed of the complaint by the Group Managing Director.

3. Process for safeguarding complaints/concerns about a member of staff

3.1 Further details regarding safeguarding complaints against staff are explained in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.2 Any complaint received regarding a member of staff in relation to safeguarding is to be passed to Charlotte Barton for investigation who will liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

3.3. Human Resources (HR) will be informed of the investigation. Dependent on the outcome, HR may follow the capability or disciplinary procedures once the complaint has been satisfied with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

4. Process for general complaints about a member of staff

- 4.1 Any other form of complaint lodged about a member of staff must be passed to HR.
- 4.2 HR will work with the line manager to determine the best course of action to provide a satisfactory outcome for all.
- 4.3 Further details of this process and accompanying appeals process can be found in the capability, disciplinary and grievance policies.