



Whole School Complaints Policy

2023-2024

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1. General Statement of Policy

Caxton College and its Early Years Foundation Stage have long prided themselves on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy and its associated procedure.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint from a parent of a registered pupil at the school is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. The complaints procedure is available to parents of former pupils provided that the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The school does not seek to limit matters to be dealt with by the complaints process but hopes that most concerns can be resolved by effective communication at the informal stage.

1.2 Policy Status

This policy has been approved by the Principal and Board of Directors of Caxton College. It provides guidelines for the handling of concerns and complaints. It takes account of the guidance provided by Part 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards, England) Regulations 2014. The complaints procedure associated with this policy may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain elements of the procedure can only be carried out during term time.

1.3 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Additional requirements apply to EYFS settings beyond those applying to the Primary and Secondary Schools. The school will investigate written complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and will notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 14 days of having received the complaint. The record of complaints will be made available to ISI on request.

1.4 Suggested guidance for parents

The overarching principle set out in the complaint procedure is that, if a parent has a concern or complaint, they should inform the School about it as soon as possible. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking to the appropriate member of staff. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response they have received they can write to the Principal or Heads of Primary and Co-Heads of Secondary, who will conduct an investigation and they will receive a written response. In the case of the Early Years Foundation Stage, if the complaint is still unresolved after writing to the Head of Early Years, the complainant should write to the Principal. Should an EYFS complaint still be unresolved following the above procedure, it may be referred to The Independent School Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA tel: [02076000100](tel:02076000100) email: concerns@isi.net

Please raise the concern initially as follows:

A concern about the safety of the complainant's child should be notified immediately to the person the complainant believes is best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the Principal.

Academic issues

- If the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, please speak or write to the Class Teacher (Primary) or Tutor or Head of Department (Secondary).
- In more serious cases, please contact the Head of Early Years, Head (Primary), or Deputy or Co-Head of Academics (Secondary) as appropriate.

Pastoral issues

- For concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the relevant Class Teacher (Primary School), Tutor or Head of Year (Secondary School)
- In more serious cases, please contact the Head of Early Years, Head (Primary), or Deputy or 'Co'-Head of Pastoral (Secondary).

Disciplinary issues

- A problem over disciplinary action taken or sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it and, if not resolved, with the Head (Primary) or Head of Early Years. Deputy or Co-Head of Pastoral (Secondary).

Financial matters

- A query relating to fees or extras should be raised with the Director of Finance and Operations.

Parents are always welcome to contact the Principal on all matters.

1.5 Number of complaints during the preceding school year

As a BSO accredited school, we share the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure outlined in this policy during the preceding school year. In the academic year of 2022/2023 we registered eighty complaints that had an informal resolution (Stage 1) and two complaints that had a formal resolution (Stage 2). There were zero complaints that reached a panel hearing (Stage 3).

2. Complaints Procedure

Caxton College has an excellent reputation, both for the quality of the teaching and the pastoral care provided to all pupils. However, if parents or guardians do have a complaint, they can expect it to be taken seriously and be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This procedure relates to those pupils who are registered on the current school roll at the time of the complaint and also covers the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

2.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents or guardians have a complaint they should normally contact the pupil's class teacher (Primary) or tutor (Secondary). The class teacher / tutor will normally expect to respond within forty-eight hours. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' or guardians' satisfaction. If the class teacher / tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult the Head of Academic or Pastoral (Secondary), Head of Primary or Head of Early Years.
- Complaints made directly to a senior member of staff will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher / tutor, unless the person who has received the complaint deems it appropriate for him or her to deal with the matter personally.
- Whichever member of staff receives and deals with the complaint they will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 working days or in the event that the class teacher / tutor or the senior member of staff fails to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised, or be able, to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

2.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

2-A

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents or guardians should put their complaint in writing to the to the Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Head Academic or Co-Head Pastoral (Secondary) or to the Principal. They will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is made against the Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Head Academic or Co-Head Pastoral (Secondary) the complaint should be put in writing to the Principal.
- In most cases, the Principal or the Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Heads Academic and Pastoral (Secondary), will speak to the parents or guardians concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal or Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Heads Academic or Pastoral (Secondary), to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal or the Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Heads Academic and Pastoral (Secondary), will make written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Principal or Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Heads Academic and Pastoral (Secondary) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents or guardians will be informed of this decision in writing, together with the reasons for it. Complainants will be notified of the outcome within 20 working days of the School having received the formal complaint.
- If parents or guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 2b of this Procedure.
- Complaints about the Principal should bypass part 2a and should be made directly to the Board of Directors (see part 2b below).

2-B

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the Principal's response or if the complaint is made against the principal the complaint should be put in writing to the Board of Directors within 10 days of the Principal's response. The complaint should clearly identify the complainant's main issue of concern and the nature of the resolution sought.
- If a complaint is made to the Board of Directors before a formal complaint has been made to the Principal, the Board may refer the matter back to the Principal for investigation at stage 2a.
- On receipt of a stage 2b complaint, the Board of Directors will arrange for investigation of the complaint and a written response will be provided to the complainants within 15 days of receipt of the complaint. The response will provide a reasoned decision to the issues raised.
- If parents or guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

2.3 Stage 3 — Panel Hearing

- If, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, parents seek to invoke Stage 3, they will be referred to the Director of Finance and Operations, who has been appointed by the Board of Directors to call hearings of a Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the School and the other two shall be selected from the Board of Directors. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Director of Finance and Operations, who shall also nominate a Chair of the Panel. The Director of Finance and Operations, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 20 working days of the Director of Finance and Operation's written acknowledgement.

- The School's legal representative may form part of the panel.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days prior to the hearing. Similarly, where the parents or guardians wish the Panel to consider any further written material, then this should be supplied within the same time period.
- The parents or guardians may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher, friend or legal representative. The parents or guardians must inform the Director of Finance and Operations, at least two days in advance, if they intend to be accompanied, by whom and in what role.
- If the parents or guardians are to be accompanied, then any staff member involved may also be accompanied by a relative, teacher, friend or legal representative.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' or guardians' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 20 working days of the Hearing. The Panel can:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur
- The Panel will write to the parents or guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint was made.
- Recommendations, if any, will be discussed with the Principal and Board of Directors.
- All written records, statements and correspondence will be held in a 'Complaints Log' by the Principal, and will be kept for at least seven years as advised by the DfE. If the complaint is in relation to safeguarding or allegations of abuse, records will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer. The School's written record of complaints relates to those at Stage 2 and, if applicable, Stage 3.
- Less serious complaints are all recorded and stored centrally. These are monitored regularly by the Principal, Head (Primary), Head of Early Years, Co-Heads Academic and Pastoral (Secondary).
- This policy is made available on the school website to all parents, staff and pupils.

- Pupils will not be penalised as a result of any complaint from their parents.
- The findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about and a copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Principal.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
- If the child leaves the School whilst a complaint is running its course then the complaints procedure will be completed. However, if the child has left the School more than three months before a complaint is received then the School will not implement the complaints procedure and will decline to hear a complaint in the absence of special circumstances.

