





## Complaints Policy

Signed	
Position	Head of School
Signed	
Reviewed by Head of Proprietor Body	R Murphy
Date Agreed	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Next Review	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2025

### Equality Statement

Centre Academy London is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability or religious belief. We provide a safe, supportive and welcoming environment.

*Centre Academy London is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.*

Complaints Record Academic Year 2023/24:

Stage 3 complaints initiated: **1**

Stage 3 complaints resolved: **1**



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Note: This Complaints Policy is available to download on the website. It is not necessary to contact the school. Parents of pupils at Centre Academy London (CAL) are automatically sent a copy upon enrolment of their child.

CAL is committed to providing the best education for our students, whom we want to be happy, healthy and above all, safe. We are, however, aware that there may be occasions when people have complaints. The following Policy sets out exactly how any concern or complaint is addressed by the school. In this regard, it is important to note that school governing bodies are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints. Moreover, as an Independent School, we are required under The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 Part 7 to adopt, make available and apply the complaints procedure so that we comply with the ISI Standards.

There are three key persons involved in the complaint's procedure:

- Head of School - Mrs K Lee Douglas, CAL, 92 St. John's Hill, Battersea, SW11 1SH. Tel: 0207 738 2344
- Proprietor - Mr Rohan Murphy, Sherwood, Loudwater Lane, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 4HQ. Tel: 07793 563 281
- Chair of Independent Panel – Miss Rebecca Rolph, [rebeccarolph@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rebeccarolph@hotmail.co.uk)

## Aims

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- be impartial and non-adversarial
- facilitate a full and fair investigation
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate
- keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement

CAL aims to meet our statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/guardians of pupils and other stakeholders.

Complaints are not defined in the Independent School Standards Regulations, but there is a substantial body of guidance, including that for Maintained Schools, suggesting that complaints can or should be subject to a formal procedure. However, it is hoped that most complaints, much like concerns, will be resolved quickly and informally, regardless of whether they come from parents, pupils or others. (Please note that this policy does not cover complaints from members of staff, as these are covered by the school's grievance and dispute procedures.)

The majority of concerns/complaints received by schools fall into the following categories:

- academic: (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, progress in a particular subject etc.).
- pastoral care: (discipline, sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of the child, accommodation etc.)
- child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues etc.)

## Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

## Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

## Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

## Responsibilities

### Complainant

Responsible for:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect

### Head of School

Responsible for:

- adopting the policy, procedures and guidelines;
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request;
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the governing body;
- dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.
- receiving any child protection issues or allegations against staff.

If any complaint is made against the Head of School, it should be referred directly to the Proprietor. The address and phone number for the Proprietor is:

Mr Rohan Murphy, Sherwood, Loudwater Lane, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 4HQ  
Tel: 07793 563 281

### Chair of the Independent Panel

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties; and
- findings are communicated to the complainant and school within **3 working days** of the hearing.

### Class Tutor

Responsible for dealing with and where possible resolving concerns/complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 (stages are explained below) of the procedure.

**All staff**

Responsible for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils, and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff; and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns; and for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Head of School.

**Complaints Procedure Stages****Stage 1: Informal Complaint Resolution**

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve them quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

1. Concerns expressed by parents or pupils to any member of staff should be dealt with by that member of staff if he/she is able to do so. If the member of staff considers themselves unable to deal with the issue the concern should be passed to the Head of School.
2. Complaints can be made in person or by telephone, email, letter or Informal Complaint Form (Appendix A).
3. If a student or parent has what they deem to be a serious complaint, they should request a Formal Complaint Form from a member of staff or access one via this Complaints Policy – see Appendices. All staff and parents have access to this policy and the forms. Once these are completed, the form should be given to the Head of School who will then carry out a full investigation of the student/young person's complaint in line with Stage 2 below.
4. Concerns/complaints which come to a member of staff from other sources should be passed immediately to the Head of School, who will inform the complainant of the action they propose to take.
5. The school will acknowledge informal complaints within **24 hours** and investigate and provide a response within **3 working days**.
6. The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Head of School and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
7. If the complaint is not resolved informally, it can then be escalated to a Stage 2 formal complaint.

**Stage 2: Formal Complaint Procedure**

A stage 2 formal complaint will be dealt with by the Head of School, however, if the complaint is about the Head of School it will be dealt with by the Proprietor. The appropriate person who is dealing with the complaint will ensure the following:

- key findings of fact are established;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties;
- the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible, is put at ease;
- findings are communicated to the complainant within **3 working days** of the hearing;

Where a parent or pupil feels that a situation has not been resolved through Stage 2's procedures, they should proceed to Stage 3.

### **Stage 3: Hearing by an Independent Panel**

Complainants who are not satisfied with the school's findings at Stage 2 can request a hearing by an independent panel assembled by the Chair of the Independent Panel. This panel will consist of the Chair and two other members independent of the school management. The complainant can request this hearing by contacting the Chair directly after they have received the outcome of Stage 2.

The hearing must be within **10 working days** of the Chair receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of their right to be accompanied at the panel hearing. The School Secretary, in consultation with the parties, must arrange relevant translations/interpreters if required.

The nominated panel's investigation will ensure:

- key findings of fact are established;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties;
- the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible, is put at ease;
- findings are communicated to the complainant and school within **3 working days** of the hearing;
- findings are issued within **28 working days** of the original complaint.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3 they may feel it appropriate to contact the school's regulator which is ISI ([concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) / 0207 600 0100) or their Local Authority's Education Department.

### **Complainant's Rights**

We believe that any complainant and anyone else involved in the complaint should be fully satisfied that the panel's findings and recommendations are entirely transparent. Accordingly, CAL will provide a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor or Head of School, and we will ensure that a written record is kept of all

written complaints that have been made in instances when the parent is not satisfied with the original response to the complaint. CAL will also record whether complaints are resolved following a formal procedure or have been addressed via an independent panel hearing. It will be specified what action has been taken by the school because of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld.

The school will ensure that correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential except where:

- The Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
- Other legal obligations exist.

Complainants are entitled to halt their complaint at any stage if they so wish by communicating this wish (preferably in writing) to the relevant complaint investigator.

### **Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of the scope of the complaints' procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints' procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint particularly intended to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

### **Retrospective Complaints**

When a student is officially off role at the school, any grievance, complaint, formal complaint, appeal, or any claim to restitution raised by a parent against the school will be deemed retrospective and therefore the school has no responsibility or obligation whatsoever to engage or interact with the complainant.

### **Reporting and Recording**

In all cases it is important for staff to use the school's 'Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form.

The Secretary will ensure that all correspondence, statements and records pertaining to the complaint are kept confidential and secure except where the inspecting body requests access to them. This is except where the secretary of state (or someone



acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

The Head of School will report to staff from time to time on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes. A complaints register will be kept by the Head of School for reporting purposes.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices.

The Head of School will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the SMT, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Head of School and Proprietor will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Head of School will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Head of School. (Monitored by Governance)

This policy will be reviewed by the Proprietor and Head of School annually.

This Policy should be read alongside the following:

- the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEN information report
- Behaviour Policy
- Student Conduct, Discipline and Exclusion Policy
- the Attendance Policy
- the Anti-bullying Policy
- the Centre Academy London Handbook, Student Handbook and Prospectus.



## Appendix A

### CENTRE ACADEMY LONDON INFORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

Complainant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Complaint

Desired outcome

Outcome of Investigation of Complaint

Date outcome communicated to complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of complaint investigator \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be completed as soon as possible after the investigation is complete and handed to the Head of School for inclusion in the Complaints Log.



## Appendix B

### CENTRE ACADEMY LONDON FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

Complainant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Complaint

Desired outcome

Outcome of Investigation of Complaint

Date outcome communicated to complainant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of complaint investigator \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be completed as soon as possible after the investigation is complete and handed to the Head of School for inclusion in the Complaints Log.