

## Northeast Manor School

### Complaints Policy

<b>Date of review:</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
<b>Date of next review:</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Reviewer:</b>	<b>Headteacher</b>

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Northeast Manor School recognises that it is right and appropriate for a parent to express concerns or make a complaint if the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that should have been done or acted unreasonably or unfairly.

The aim of this policy and procedure is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level and that it is resolved as quickly as possible.

This policy follows Part 7, Standard 33 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

#### **POLICY**

Northeast Manor School would like to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and students should never feel, or be made to feel, that a concern or complaint, which is made in a reasonable and appropriate way, will be taken amiss or will adversely affect the student or his/her opportunities at the school.

We will investigate and seek to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive manner. We will treat every concern or complaint as an opportunity to put right a matter which may have gone wrong, and to review our systems and procedures to ensure that they are appropriate and that they are working properly. We recognise that a concern or complaint, which is not resolved quickly and fairly, can soon become a cause of resentment or turn into a formal complaint, which is damaging to relationships and to the culture of our school.

This policy and procedure relates to all complaints by parents/carers and pupils made against the school except in respect of:

- (a) Child Protection allegations (Please see **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**);
- (b) Exclusions (Please see **Positive Behaviour Policy**); and
- (c) Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications (Please see **Examinations Internal Appeals Procedures Policy**)

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Stage One: Informal Resolution.**

It is in everyone's interest that any concerns or complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage and by the most appropriate person. The main point of contact between parents/carers and the School is the form tutor. In most cases, the concern should be resolved quickly and informally. If parents/carers have any concerns at all then they are encouraged to telephone or email their child's form tutor whose email address can be found on the website, (Staff and Governors List).

The form tutor should respond initially to their concern within 48 hours. The form tutor will use their best endeavours to resolve an informal complaint within 5 working days of them being raised, except where they are raised immediately before or during the school holidays. In this instance, the 5 working days will start from the first day back after the holiday.

Tutors will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher will usually be referred to the child's tutor unless the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher decide that it is appropriate for them to deal with the matter.

For boarding matters, please telephone or email the Head of Boarding ([evalynnecharmer@northeast.co.uk](mailto:evalynnecharmer@northeast.co.uk)).

If the concern or complaint is not resolved, or in the event that the parents/ carers are not satisfied with the resolution, they will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure.

### **Stage Two: Formal Resolution.**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis or if parents/ carers are dissatisfied with the way their concern was handled at Stage One , then parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher and indicate how they wish the complaint to be resolved.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

The Headteacher will then ask the Deputy Headteacher to investigate the complaint. In most cases the Deputy Headteacher will meet or speak to the parents/carers concerned. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The Deputy Headteacher will investigate the complaint and will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews relating to the complaint. Once the Deputy Headteacher is satisfied that as far as is reasonably practicable he has established the relevant facts of the matter, the Headteacher will review the evidence and make a decision. The decision will be made in writing, giving reasons for her decision, and should be made no later than 15 working days after receipt of the formal complaint from the parents/ carers unless the complaint was

received immediately before or during the school holidays, in which case the written decision will be made within 15 working days of the start of the new term.

The Headteacher's letter will make it clear as to how the parents/carers may appeal to the Governors if they are dissatisfied with the Headteacher's decision.

If the parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the parents/carers can refer it to the Chair of Governors by writing c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the School address or by email to [clerktogovernors@northeast.co.uk](mailto:clerktogovernors@northeast.co.uk), stating clearly that they are making a complaint. The Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for her decision. The decision should be made no later than 15 working days after receipt of the Stage Two formal complaint from the parents/ carers unless the complaint was received immediately before or during the school holidays, in which case the written decision will be made within 15 working days of the start of the new term.

The Chair of Governors' letter will make it clear as to how the parents/carers may appeal to the Governors if they are dissatisfied with the Chair of Governors' decision.

### **Stage Three: Complaints Appeal Panel**

If, on the basis of a Stage 2 written complaint, parents/carers are not satisfied with the written response received from the Headteacher, they should write to the Clerk to the Governors at the School address and request that the complaint be considered further by an independent complaints panel set up for this purpose.

Parents/carers must submit their appeal in writing to the Clerk to Governors within 10 working days of the date of the School's decision made by the Headteacher in accordance with Stage Two of the complaints procedure above. They should provide details of their complaint, the reasons why they believe that the complaints have not been resolved under Stage Two and their suggested resolutions of the complaint.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 3 persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Two will be member of the School's Governing Body and one shall be a person who is independent of the management and running of the school. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days. Where the appeal is received immediately before or during the school holidays the Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge receipt as soon as is practicable and will schedule a hearing

to take place within 20 working days of the start of the new term

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. In such cases, all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position. Copies of such evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than 10 working days in advance of the hearing, so that it can be supplied to all parties by the Clerk not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing. This evidence will be considered by the Panel along with the original appeal submission.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

The parents/carers may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If the parents/carers are unable to attend on the date of the panel hearing, they may ask for it to be adjourned to a later date but must accept that any new panel hearing date may no longer be within the 20 working days referred to above.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how, and in what timeframe, it should be carried out.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and a decision as to whether the complaint is upheld or dismissed. They may make recommendations to the Headteacher or the full Governing Body, as appropriate.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

#### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

#### Written Records.

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal

complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

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 Act requests access to them.

Signed:

Date:

Headteacher