COGNITA
TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Milbourne Lodge School

Complaint Procedure

September 2017

1.0 Introduction

1.1 We take great care with the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our pupils. However, if parents do wish to make a complaint they can expect the following procedure to apply.

2.0 Working day

2.1 For the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' shall mean working days during school term time.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's form teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved at this level to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with a member of the School Senior Leadership Team.
- Any complaints made directly to the Head/Principal will usually be referred back to the relevant member of staff unless the Head/Principal considers it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should this be the case, the aim will still be to resolve the matter informally. However, the involvement of the Head/Principal at this stage will be in exceptional circumstances.
- Stage 1 complaints will normally be addressed within 7 working days from the point at which they are received. Where there are reasons which prevent this from happening, the staff member dealing with the complaint will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.
- A written record of all complaints will be kept and this will include the date on which the complaint was received, the action taken and the outcome.
- Should the matter not be resolved informally, despite the teacher's best efforts, then the parents are able to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

3.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint informally, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head/Principal. The Head/Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take including the person to take the lead in any investigation.
- The Head/Principal will respond to parents within five working days indicating how the school proposes to proceed.
- It may be necessary for the Head/Principal, or the person taking the lead, to carry out further investigations. If this is the case then written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head/Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, during the course of the investigation, a decision will be made in relation to the complaint within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received. Parents will be informed of the decision, and the reasoning behind it, in writing.
- Where it is not possible to give a full reply within 10 working days, the Head/Principal will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.
- It is expected that a resolution will be reached at this stage and that parents will feel assured that all of their concerns have been fully and fairly considered. If, in extreme circumstances, parents are not satisfied with the process they are able to bring into play Stage 3 of this procedure.
- *Note: Should a parent wish to raise a complaint about the Head/Principal, they should contact the Cognita Office by telephone or writing in the first instance. This will trigger contact with the Complaint Co-ordinator to clarify and discuss the matter. Where there is a complaint against the Head/Principal, the Director of Education will appoint an investigator. These complaints will normally be dealt with within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.*

3.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- Where the parents are not satisfied with the response or process undertaken at Stage 2, the matter will be referred to a Complaints Panel.
- Parents should request a referral to a Complaints Panel by completing the form at the back of this document.
- A complaint form should be delivered by post or by email to the Cognita Office within 5 working days of receipt of the decision at Stage 2 above.
- Cognita will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 complaint and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint.
- The Appeal Panel will be appointed by the Director of Education and at least one of the three members shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The members of the Appeal Panel will have no connection to the pupil or the family concerned and will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- If the Chair of the Appeal Panel deems it necessary, s/he may require that further particulars of the complaint/appeal and any relevant documents or records be supplied in advance of the panel meeting. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all the parties wherever practicable and not later than 3 working days prior to this hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. Recordings of hearings are not permitted.
- If possible the Appeal Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without need for further investigation.
- A written record of the proceedings will be taken.
- After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of their decision and the reasons for it.
- The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Head/Principal and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be held confidentially and made available for inspection in the school by the proprietor and by inspectors on request.
- This exhausts the complaints procedure after the decision has been communicated in writing. The decision of the Appeal Panel is Final

4.0 Early Years

4.1 Where there is separate registered Early Years provision for children under the age of 2, this policy is compliant with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. All complaints relating to the EYFS are investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. Where parents do not believe that an early years complaint has been resolved they can raise this with Ofsted via email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 1231. All paperwork with regard to complaints to Ofsted will be kept by the school for 3 years.

5.0 Vexatious Complaints

5.1 There may be exceptional occasions when, despite the following of all stages of the procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, Cognita reserves the right to inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Where a complainant seeks to raise a subsequent complaint matter which is otherwise different to the original complaint at Stage 3, this matter in itself would be treated as a new informal complaint.

6.0 Recording of complaints

6.1 All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are duly recorded in the School Complaint Register, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result. The stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded.

7.0 Confidentiality

7.1 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential. The exceptions to confidentiality are the Secretary of State or an inspection body. The School will make available to an inspectorate on request a written record of any complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result.

8.0 Publication

8.1 This procedure is published on the school website.

9.0 Provisions relating to complaints dealt with using this procedure

- For the avoidance of doubt, no complaint may be made under this procedure in respect of matters which have already been dealt with in an appeal under the School's Behaviour Policy.
- This procedure will not be relevant where other statutory or organisational provisions apply, for example, child protection, racial incidents or special educational provision. If concerns relate to child protection matters, the appropriate Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures will be followed. If the concerns relate to school exclusion, the Exclusion Policy and Procedure will apply.
- This procedure cannot be used to deal with appeals following explusion or removal. There is a separate procedure in place in accordance with the parent contract.
- Nothing in this Policy shall prejudice the right of parents of a pupil with SEN or a disability to seek redress from the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they believe their child has received unfavourable treatment.
- A complaint can be made by any parent (or person deemed to have parental responsibility under the terms of the Children Act 2004) of a pupil registered at the school.
- A complaint cannot be raised in relation to a pupil who has left the school. The child is taken off roll on the final day of the term in which they leave.
- When the complaint concerns only the matter of finance such as fees in lieu which remain outstanding, the matter of the fees owed alone falls outside the scope of this procedure. The Head/Principal of the School remains responsible for all financial decisions.
- Where a parent is unhappy with this procedure, they can contact the Department for Education (DfE).
- Complaints from groups of parents linked to the leadership team and/or management style will not be heard collectively. Confidentiality must be maintained for each individual complaint.

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Headteacher.
If your concern is specifically about the Headteacher, please complete and return to Cognita Head Office using the following details: PA to Director of Education, Cognita, 5+7 Diamond Court, Opal Drive, Eastlake Park, Milton Keynes, MK15 0DU.

Basic details	
Name of School	
Your name	
Pupil's name	
Relationship to the pupil	
Address	
Email address	
Daytime contact number	
Mobile number	

What is your complaint about? Indicate (x) those that apply			
	Health and safety		SEN/D
	Curriculum		School meals
	Exclusion		School uniform
	Behaviour		Communication
	Staff		Other (please state)

Please give a brief description of your complaint
How have you already expressed your concern to the school? We cannot investigate your complaint if you have not taken the opportunity to address your concern at an early stage.
What did the school do to address your complaint? (Who, What, Where, How, When)
Name of the person who originally considered your concern or complaint
What actions will resolve the problem now?

Signature	
Name	
Date	

Ownership and consultation	
Document sponsor (role)	Director of Education
Document author (name)	Simon Camby
Specialist advice	Jane Cooper - Chief Inspector, SIS
Consultation	Heads at: Breaside Prep, Salcombe Prep, Meoncross, Polam and Southbank Hampstead. Assistant Directors of Education: Robin Davies and Danuta Tomasz.

Audience	
Audience	Parents of pupils at Cognita schools School staff

Document application and publication	
England	Yes
Wales	No
Spain	Yes

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Related documentation	○ Independent School Standards ○ British School Overseas Standards