



## Complaints Procedure and Policy

### Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7 paragraph 25 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 with the provision of information being made available in Part 6 Paragraph 24 of the Regulatory Requirements.

### Applies to:

Christleton International Studio where the record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three years.

### Timescale

- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.

### Availability

- The Complaints Procedure is provided in the information for prospective students, parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.
- This procedure is also made available to parents, staff and students, in the School Prospectus, and on the School website: [www.christletoninternationalstudio.co.uk](http://www.christletoninternationalstudio.co.uk)
- It is also made available on request to Reception at Christleton International Studio during the school day, or by e-mail: [enquiries@christletoninternationalstudio.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@christletoninternationalstudio.co.uk)

### Monitoring and Review:

- The Principal logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- The Local Governing Body monitor the Complaints Procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- The Local Governing Body undertake a formal annual review of these procedures for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Christleton International Studio will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to students will be of the highest order. However, if parents have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. We are always willing to listen to concerns and anxieties, parental and student concerns being of particular importance. We aim for the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom our students are entrusted. Dealing with parental concerns is a vital part of the ethos and mission of Christleton International Studio. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.



A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional wellbeing and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of students at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a student at the school, parents or guardians of a student at the school or several parents or guardians of students at the school. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process, Christleton International Studio will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate.

Parents also have a right to make a complaint to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Details of how this may be done are given at the end of this procedure. The School also has a 'whistle blowing policy' that is detailed in the staff handbook.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

*(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally if parents feel able to voice them as soon as they arise. Obviously, the more information the school gives to parents the less scope there is for misunderstanding. Parents will be encouraged to give feedback, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology, if appropriate, will resolve any issues. Every effort will be made to allay concerns at this stage and with the least possible formality. Our ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint, as through open dialogue, a resolution should always be accomplished.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the teacher. In most cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Assistant Principal / Principal.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within (five) 5 school days, or in the event that the teachers and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

*(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally the day of receiving the complaint so as to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- Within 10 school days of receiving the complaint, the Principal will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. At any point in the process the Principal may decide or agree to commission a further investigation. If this occurs, the timescale may be extended and the complainant will be informed of the extension and the reason for it.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will give reasons for the decision. A note will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.



- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Principal, an approach should first be made to The CEO of Christleton Learning Trust. This should include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Trust is obliged to investigate the matter and will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure

The Principal will:

- establish what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the issue;  
interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning and
- keep notes of each interview.

When the investigation is complete, the Principal will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- An apology
- An explanation
- A clarification of any misunderstanding
- An admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated
- An undertaking to review school Policies in light of the complaint.

### **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) or due to the nature of the complaint they do not wish to follow Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure, they will be referred to the Panel Convenor who has been appointed by the Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The Panel will consist of at least three people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors.
- The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, should agree with all parties the date of the Appeal Meeting within five (5) school days of receipt of the written referral of the complaint. The meeting itself should be held within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the referral. If the complainant or Principal wishes to submit information in writing to the Panel this should be sent to the Panel Convenor at least five (5) days before the date of the hearing.
- 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 (5) working days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant, who could be parents or guardians, may be accompanied to the panel hearing by as many persons as they decide.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five (5) working days of the Hearing.
- A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:



- sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
- available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of the Board of Advisors, CEO of CLT and the Principal.
- The complainants will have the right of appeal to a higher authority, namely Ofsted whose contact details are given at the end of this policy.

As far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the complainant will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

**Role of the Panel Convenor is:**

- to confirm to all parties in writing the date, time and venue of the hearing;
- to receive and distribute any documentation to be read before the hearing;
- to meet and welcome all parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- to record the proceedings and
- to notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

The wording of any letters will be agreed with the Chair of the Panel.

**The role of the Chair of the Panel is to ensure that:**

- procedure is properly followed;
- the procedure for the hearing of the complaint is explained to all parties and that they have the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- all parties are put at ease, especially those who are unfamiliar with such a hearing;
- proceedings are kept as informal as possible and that everyone treats each other with respect and courtesy;
- the Panel operates in an open-minded and independent way and
- time is given for all parties to consider 'new' evidence.

**The order of the Proceedings for hearing of the complaint:**

1. Welcome, introductions and explanation of the proceedings by the Chair.
2. The complainant is invited to explain the complaint.
3. The Principal may question the complainant.
4. The Panel may question the complainant.
5. If there are any witnesses for the complainant, each one is invited to the hearing in turn and in each case the witness is invited to speak. The Principal may then question them, followed by the Panel. In each case the witness may leave after their evidence has been given.
6. The Principal is invited to explain the school's actions.
7. If there are any witnesses for the school, they are treated in exactly the same way as the witnesses for the complainant.
8. When the Chair is sure that all parties have asked all they need to, the complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
9. The Principal is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
10. The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within 3 school days following the day of the hearing.
11. Both parties leave together whilst the panel decides on the issues.



### **Options open to the Panel:**

The Panel may:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not re-occur.

### **After the Hearing:**

The Chair of the Panel agrees with the Convenor the wording of the letter to be sent to both parties. The Convenor will:

- ensure that the letter is sent out in accordance with the agreed time scales and procedure as stated in Stage 3 of this policy;
- write up the notes of the meeting and gives a copy to the Chair of the Panel;
- ensure that any recommendation to change school policies or procedures is put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents

### **Confidentiality**

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except;

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails

### **Record keeping for the Whole School**

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, or proceed to a panel hearing, is kept by the Principal for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Local Governing Body and Christleton Learning Trust examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint. Parents may contact the Principal to ask for the number of formal complaints made during the previous academic year.

### **Child Protection**

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Principal (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

### **Complaints from External Bodies**

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils will be dealt with on a general basis,

### **Grievance, Disciplinary and Capability Procedures with reminders to all about the school's expectations**

This Complaints Procedure is totally separate from any Disciplinary or Capability Procedures. Should a complaint lead to concerns on the part of the Principal or Board about the capability or conduct of a member of staff, these would not be discussed or dealt with within this procedure. Additionally, this procedure does not apply to members of staff who would need to follow the school's Grievance Procedure. In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to Ofsted should they wish to, the relevant contact details are:



Ofsted. Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

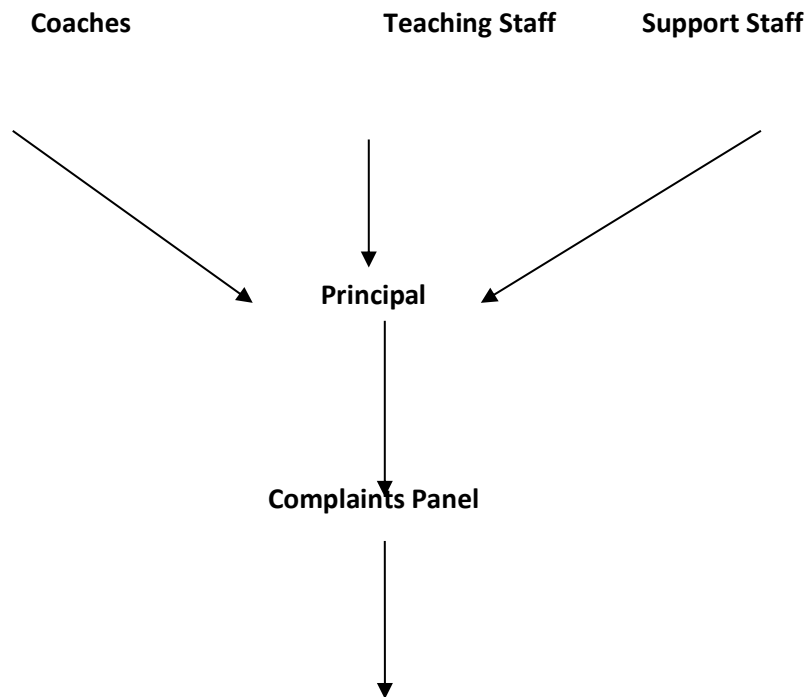
Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## COMPLAINTS TREE

### Procedure for complaints by Parents or Members of Staff



### NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME TO ALL RELEVANT PARTIES

Signed:

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Kate Ryan  
Principal

Dr. Neil Jones  
Chair of Board of Advisors