



supporting YOUR future

Arbour House Complaints Policy & Procedure

Policy Updated: **May 2017**

Policy Review Date: **November 2017**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Potens Compliments and Complaints policy
- Appendix 1: Supporting Young People to understand how to complain;
- Appendix 2: Young People's guide to raising a concern or complaint.

Introduction

Arbour House School hopes that the adoption of a clear complaints procedure will help to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly.

Policy Statement

Arbour House School is committed to providing high quality services and helping any party solve any problems they have in our relationship. We recognise however, that we sometimes get things wrong or make mistakes and have adopted a complaints procedure to resolve concerns as quickly and smoothly as possible. An overview of this procedure is contained within our parent pack.

Whilst we would rather everyone is always satisfied with our service, receiving complaints may also help us to see where our services or procedures might be improved. Arbour House School ensures that anyone making a complaint is not treated less favourably as a result and support is offered to those who wish to raise a concern or make a complaint.

Overview of Procedure

Concerns and complaints may be received from young people, their families, significant others or members of the public.

All efforts should be made to resolve the concern or complaint primarily with the appropriate member of staff. If the complaint cannot be resolved with the appropriate member of staff then the complainant should contact the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days. A full response would normally be given within 7 working days unless the matter is complicated. Where this is the case, the complainant will be advised of what action is being taken and provided with an estimated time to expect a full response. The response will be confirmed in writing.

The complainant will be kept informed of the process of their complaint and provided with details of the outcome of their complaint.

Definition of a concern/complaint

Arbour House School defines a concern/complaint as being any derogatory comment made about any situation at Arbour House School. The complainant will be asked to confirm if they are raising a concern or if they wish to make a formal complaint. In all cases the Executive Headteacher will refer the concern/complaint to the Headteacher who will exercise professional judgment as to what is considered a justified or unjustified concern/complaint.

External Complaints

The pupils of Arbour House School access the local community on a regular basis. There may be occasions when members of the local community may wish to complain. Staff who support young people in the community carry with them information cards, these cards hold brief information about autism and contact details for the school. In dealing with complaints made by the general public staff should remain calm and advise the member of the public to put the complaint in writing to the Headteacher. (c/o Potens School – confidential- addressee only)

Oral Concerns and Complaints

Initial concerns or complaints should be raised by speaking to the class Teacher, who should establish whether the complainant is raising a concern or lodging a complaint. The Teacher will make every effort to resolve this at this informal stage.

Written Complaints

All written complaints should be addressed to the appropriate professional. (c/o Arbour House School – Confidential – addressee only). Any written complaint received by another member of staff will be passed directly to the Headteacher who will then decide if the complaint is justified or unjustified. The Headteacher will delegate the resolution of the complaint accordingly and ensure written acknowledgement of the complaint within 2 working days. A copy of the letter will be attached to the complaint and filed in the complaints file.

Supporting our Young People to raise a concern/complain

In recognition of the young people's difficulties with complex social and communication difficulties particularly autism, the school welcomes complaints made on behalf of the young people from interested parties. In the absence of an appropriate person we will support the individual to access the services of an independent advocate.

We also work with our young people to develop their understanding, communication skills and ability to recognise when they are not happy, the reasons why and how to make a complaint (Appendix 1: Supporting young people to understand how to complain). Staff will support our young people to access the complaints procedure; there is a simple version of the complaints procedure which is available to all young people and staff will work to support individual learning styles and needs with alternative formats.

Escalating a concern or complaint

The details of the concern or complaint will be passed to the Headteacher. If the concern or complaint has not been resolved at this stage then the Executive Headteacher will deal with this accordingly.

The Executive Headteacher will reply in writing within 2 working days outlining what course of action they intend to take.

Recording Concerns and Complaints

A written record of concerns and complaints, whether raised orally or in writing, and any action taken will be held in the complaints record book, held in each department. The records will indicate if the complainant raised a concern or lodged a complaint, and whether this was able to be resolved at an informal level or if it proceeded to a formal process.

This record will include the following points:

- the person making the complaint
- the date of the complaint
- the nature of the complaint
- whether or not in writing
- a time line of any action taken
- the outcome of any action taken
- final outcome of the complaint
- A time line of correspondence held with the complainant.

Once the concern or complaint has been concluded all of the relevant paperwork including records of any correspondence are collated into one report. This report is then passed to the Executive Headteacher.

Staff being the subject of a formal complaint

If a member of staff is the subject of a formal complaint then they are exempt from taking any responsibility for the consideration or response to the complaint.

Any complaint made against the Executive Headteacher will be passed to the Board of Proprietors who will deal with the complaint accordingly.

Disciplinary Action

In some cases a complaint may lead to disciplinary action against an individual. For which there are separate procedures. If this is the case the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. Under the organisations disciplinary procedures the outcome of these will remain confidential.

Information which requires referral

In some cases, such as child protection issues there may be a need to pass on relevant information to the Local Safeguarding Board, the young person's social worker or the placing authority. All relevant information will be passed in a professional and confidential manner.

Procedures

The School Procedures have four main stages.

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher / Executive Headteacher;
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by the Board of Proprietors.

Stage 1 – concern heard by staff member

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact with their child's class teacher. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – complaint heard by Headteacher / Executive Headteacher

The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following the investigation the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage

Stage 3 – complaint heard by the Board of Proprietors

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 2, then you will need to write to the Board of Proprietors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before them. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the acknowledgment.

The aim of the Board of Proprietor's hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The Board will comprise of Proprietor's and an independent member who is not connected with the organisation. The complainant or if this is a pupil, their parent / carer will also be invited to attend the hearing. All parties will be notified of the Board's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

Appeals against a decision Where the concern is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and the complainant still feels aggrieved they may write to:

The COO, Nicki Stadames (confidential/addressee only) 68, Grange Road West, Birkenead, Merseyside, CH41 4DB.

Appendix 1: Supporting young people to understand how to complain.

Pupils at Arbour House have regular meetings which will involve an opportunities to comment on things, events, people, activities that the young people have liked and not liked using individual communication systems.

Pupils will have the opportunity to comment on the different activities that they have done during the day to say whether they liked or did not like them.

When individuals are used to and consistent with 'like' and 'don't like', they should then be paired with the 'happy' and 'sad' symbols. These can then be included into individual and group activities around 'like' and 'don't like'.

If the young person become consistent with the concepts of 'happy' and 'sad', this could be extended using a rating scale (e.g. 0=really sad, 5= really happy) to give more details on their exact feeling about things.

The young person will then be introduced to using their happy/sad symbols to give to someone or put in a box to express a complaint. The rating scales and like/don't like boards will be used help the service user to give more detail on what they are unhappy about.

Appendix 2 : Young people's guide to raising a concern or complaint

Step 1: Raising the concern or complaint:

The first step is to talk to a member of staff. You can do this yourself or you can ask a member of our team to help you, you could also ask a family member, a friend, your social worker or an advocate. If you don't feel you have anyone who can help you - tell us and we will identify someone for you.

Usually, the best person to talk to will be the person who dealt with the issue you are concerned with, as they will usually be in the best position to help you quickly and to put things right. If they are not available, or you would prefer to approach someone else, then you can talk to your nominated Teaching Assistant.

We will try to resolve the problem on the spot if we can. If we can't do this, for example because information we need is not to hand, then we will take a record of your concern and arrange the best way of getting back to you. This will normally be within two days.

Step 2: Taking your concern/complaint further.

We hope you will only feel the need to make a formal complaint as a last resort and that you will raise your concern to the person dealing with the matter first to give them a chance to put things right. However, if you are still unhappy, the next step is to put your concern/complaint to the Headteacher, setting out the details, explaining what you think went wrong and what you feel would put things right. If you find putting your concern/complaint in writing difficult, you can always ask a member of staff to take notes of your concern/ complaint or you could ask a family member, a friend or your advocate. You should make sure you agree with what they have recorded and that they provide you with your own copy. This record should be passed promptly to Headteacher to deal with.