

SPECIALIST EDUCATION SERVICES

Parents and Carers Complaints and Representations Policy and Practice (Abbreviated Version)

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is a shortened version of the full Complaints and Representations Policy and Practice document which can also be downloaded from our website (www.specialisteducation.co.uk). This policy and practice document sets out the way that general complaints are handled.

Any person who complains will be listened to and their complaint dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. You will be kept informed of progress throughout the process.

We try to deal with all complaints at an early informal stage. This will mean simply talking over whatever concern has been raised with any member of the staff team. Sometimes it may need the involvement of a particular member of the team, for example a Personal Tutor or a Case Co-ordinator. We would expect the Head of Care, Registered Manager, Head of Education or Deputy Head of Education to be able to help if needed.

If things can't be sorted out in any other way it may need the SES Principal's involvement and if all else fails the Directors of SES. In serious situations that reach the Directors a complaints panel will be formed.

We want to answer any concerns without using the SES Principal or Directors if at all possible, as they may be required if it becomes more formal.

The SES Deputy Principal is regarded as the equivalent of the SES Principal for the purposes of a complaint and should be contacted immediately in the absence of the SES Principal.

2 WHO DOES THIS DOCUMENT APPLY TO AND WHAT DOES IT COVER?

This policy and practice document applies to parents and carers. The full document describes how it also applies to young people, staff, other professionals and members of the public.

Complaints about the following issues have their own, separate procedures and cannot be considered under this policy:

- any action which may fall under Child Protection
- matters which are the responsibility of the Placing Authority,
- the conduct of any staff at the home that is a matter for the home's disciplinary procedures,
- content of a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan, and
- admissions to the home.

If you are concerned about any of the above please contact the SES Principal of Avocet House or Turnstone House.

Anyone can also raise concerns directly with Ofsted or the Department for Education (DfE). You will find their contact numbers at the end of this document.

3 WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT

Concerns are like very early questioning of something that has been said or has happened, where things just need clearing up. This is very often the best way to deal with problems at an early stage without formal procedures. The formal procedures are here to safeguard everyone, should issues not be sorted at this point. In most cases this first approach can resolve issues quickly.

Concerns are not formally recorded, unless they become complaints.

4 THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

4.1 COMPLAINTS ABOUT CARE

Parents/carers who are unhappy about any aspect of their child's **care** at SES should firstly ask to speak to their child's Personal Tutor or Case Co-ordinator.

If things cannot be cleared up at this stage then the complaint will be addressed by the Head of Care or the Registered Manager.

4.2 COMPLAINTS ABOUT EDUCATION

Parents/carers who are unhappy about any aspect of their child's **education** at SES should firstly ask to speak to their child's Learning Mentor.

If things cannot be resolved at this stage then the complaint will be addressed by the Deputy Head of Education or the Head of Education.

4.3 HOW THINGS ARE DEALT WITH

Usually, because of close working relationships with parents/carers, problems or worries can easily be sorted at an early stage. However, if after discussion the matter remains unresolved the formal complaints procedure will be followed.

All complaints will be properly, sensitively and carefully investigated according to the procedures described within this policy.

We understand that parents/carers may need support during the process and someone not involved directly with the complaint will be appointed to offer this support.

Complaints are usually addressed within 7 calendar days of a formal notification.

5 HOW WE INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS

The person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;

- meet with the you or contact you;
- clarify what you feel would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

6 WHAT WE DO TO TRY AND RESOLVE COMPLAINTS

A complaint can be resolved at any time by one or more of the following.

- acknowledging that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- making an apology;
- offering an explanation;
- admitting that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- giving an assurance that the event complained of will not happen again;
- explaining the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- giving an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint.

You might be asked what actions you feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that someone could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Areas of agreement between everyone will be identified. We will also clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred.

7 WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT?

7.1 PRELIMINARY

Any adult receiving what appears to be a complaint should check whether it is indeed a **concern** being raised or a **complaint**. This should be done by asking the person concerned a direct question. This is an important first step as concerns can usually be dealt with swiftly and without formal recording. Should the person concerned wish their comments to be dealt with as a complaint then the following procedures will apply. **A diagram showing these stages is given on the following page.**

7.2 FLOW CHART: STAGES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

STAGE 1
EARLY
RESOLUTION
STAGE

Expression of complaint to member of staff.
Satisfactory outcome reached?
No Yes → **No further action**
Refer to Deputy Head of Education, Deputy Care
Manager or Head of Care
Satisfactory outcome reached?
No Yes → **No further action**

STAGE 2
FORMAL
CONSIDERATION

Complainant makes written complaint to Head of
Education or Registered Manager.
Investigation conducted and reported to complainant
Satisfactory outcome reached?
No Yes → **No further action**

STAGE 3
REFERRAL TO
THE SES PRINCIPAL

Complainant makes formal complaint to the Principal
Investigation conducted and reported to complainant
Satisfactory outcome reached?
No Yes → **No further action**

STAGE 4
REFERRAL TO
THE DIRECTORS

Complainant makes formal complaint to the Directors
Complaints Panel Meeting Convened
Complainant and SES Principal attend
Complainant and Principal notified of outcome within
7 days

If at this point a satisfactory outcome is not reached you will be given appropriate contact details as described later in this policy document.

8 COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE ACTION OF THE HEAD OF EDUCATION OR REGISTERED MANAGER

Where such matters refer to the conduct of the Head of Education or Registered Manager they should be referred to the SES Principal.

9 CONFIDENTIALITY

All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

10 IF ALL PREVIOUS AVENUES HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED

In the event of all procedures having been followed and the complaint is not resolved, further representation can be made to:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or telephone their contact centre on 0300 123 1231
- Department for Education (DfE), through their website www.gov.uk or the DfE Helpline: 0370 000 2288