

Synaptic Trust – Complaints Policy

June 2019

INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT:

We are committed to creating futures for all in a welcoming and supportive learning environment, in which all pupils feel valued and challenged to be resilient thinkers, active learners with transferable skills and have an appetite for world learning.

In the Synaptic Trust all pupils are valued, inspired and respected within our happy, welcoming family.

We set high expectations for all our pupils. Practitioners give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in their learning, by providing a relevant and challenging curriculum with an emphasis on personalised learning.

All children have unique experiences to share. Across the trust we celebrate this diversity by valuing the contribution of all pupils and providing a learning environment that encourages interdependence.

Our trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting welfare of children and expects staff to share this commitment.

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 We believe that the academies within our Trust provide a good education for all our children, and that the CEO and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the trust is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Our trust aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3. The complaints process

How to share a concern

3.1 If a parent/carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing in our trust, they should, in the first instance, **discuss the matter with their child's class teacher**. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

What to do if the matter is not resolved through informal discussion

3.2 Where a parent/carer feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to **discuss it with the Head of the school**. The Head of school considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

How to take the matter further

3.3 If your complaint has still not been resolved you should **write to the Chair of Governors of your school** and explain the nature of your complaint and why you think it has still not been resolved. The governing body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It may arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain her/his complaint in more detail. The academy should give the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

3.4 It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint against a member of staff at this stage. Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.

3.5 It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. The governing body will usually convene a small panel of 3 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. The Chair of the panel should notify the Head of School and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Head of School is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant. If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Head of School has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.

3.6 The Head of School and the complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days. This is the final stage in the academy's Complaints Procedure. The Governing Body's decision is final.

Sharing a concern about the Head of School

3.7 Should a parent/carer have a complaint about the Head of School, s/he should first **make an appointment to discuss it with the Interim CEO, Ms A Debono**. If this does not resolve the matter, s/he can make a **formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors of the academy**, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. On receipt of the complaint the governing body will follow the same procedure as described above in items 3.3 to 3.6.

3.8 Where the complainant has been through the academy's internal complaints procedures (with or without recourse to a complaints review panel) and is still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governing body or believes that the governing body acted "unreasonably", s/he can complain to the Secretary of State in the Department for Education under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996. Please note that "unreasonable" is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority could act in the circumstances.

The complainant should write to: The Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT or call 0870 001 2288. Since 2007 Ofsted also has powers to investigate certain complaints by parents about their child's school. Complainants should write to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester.