



EDINBURGH
STEINER
SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Introduction

Parents and carers have a right to make a complaint to the School in relation to any aspect of their child's education. Parents and carers also have the right to make a complaint about any aspect of the School community. It is the School's policy to acknowledge the receipt of all complaints quickly and consider each one carefully.

For the purpose of clarification, for this document, and for general practice:

A *concern* shares information or expresses a hopeful resolution to something which is perceived to be a problem. A concern is **informal**

A *complaint* expresses a desire for redress of a grievance. A complaint is therefore a **formal** request for action to be taken

Complaints Procedure

A. Informal procedure

The maintenance of a good working relationship between children, teachers and parents/carers is a vital ingredient of a successful education. Inevitably, however, differences of perception do occur and these put a strain on relationships from time to time.

While every circumstance is different and must be examined on its own terms, it is helpful to set out the general procedures which apply to addressing problems. Prevention is always better than cure. Parents/carers are therefore requested to tackle problems as they emerge so that they do not get worse. Not all problems, of course, are easily resolvable. Nevertheless, openness, humility, humour and a little imagination can often help transform a situation. In some cases, patience is the essential ingredient.

If the concern is about a pupil, then the first point of contact in registering a concern is to the pupil's Kindergarten Teacher, Class Teacher or Class Guardian. If, for whatever reason, that is difficult, then a member of the Management Group should be approached. This may be done either in person, by telephone via the School Office, or by booking an appointment for a Management surgery. Times for these surgeries are listed in the Tuesday Notice. The Management Group will consider what action is appropriate. This may mean taking the matter to the College of Teachers for discussion, or perhaps arranging a meeting between the parties concerned. For matters with school-wide implications or issues concerning school policy, a member of the Board of Trustees can be contacted via the Bursar. If the above informal approach cannot be adopted, or if it has not been effective in resolving the problem, the Formal Procedure outlined below may be followed.

If the concern is of a more general nature, then details of the concern can be put in writing and sent by email to the Management Group via the School Coordinator:

management@edinburghsteinerschool.org.uk

Alternatively, any member of the School community may book an appointment in person with a member of the Management Group. Times for 'Management surgeries' are listed in the Tuesday Notice.

B. Formal Procedure

A parent/carer may register a formal complaint with the Management Group. Details of the complaint should be put in writing and sent by email to the Management Group via the School Coordinator: management@edinburghsteinerschool.org.uk or sent as a letter by post to the School's registered address and marked for the attention of 'Management.'

1. Following the receipt of an enquiry or written correspondence, The School Coordinator will determine whether it should be regarded as a concern or a complaint
2. The School Coordinator will acknowledge receipt of written correspondence within two working days and forward details of the process, including timelines, to the complainant
3. If the complaint is deemed 'formal,' a designated Trustee will be appointed to oversee the process. The Trustee will be copied in to all correspondence but will take no active part in the process until the final stages
4. Communication between the School and the complainant will normally be via email, or by phone if preferred. A log of telephone conversations will be kept. Meetings may be arranged in school if appropriate. Minutes will be taken of any meetings that do take place and these will be made available to the designated Trustee on request

5. The concern/complaint is passed to the Chair of Management who appoints a Management Group member as the Named Member of Management (NMM) to personally oversee the concern/complaint
6. The NMM assigned to the concern/complaint will contact the complainant and copy in the designated Trustee
7. The NMM investigates the concern/complaint by following the complaints procedure
8. College is informed about the concern/complaint to maintain oversight, except in cases involving child protection or where confidentiality has been requested by the complainant
9. The NMM may request, in writing, that the relevant department, mandate group, Early Years Practitioner, Class Teacher or Guardian takes action to resolve the concern/complaint. Following such as request, a response must be provided in writing to the NMM within 7 days
10. The NMM will update the complainant in writing on the progress of the concern/complaint within 7 days (subject to the restrictions outlined in the notes below and assuming it has not already been resolved)
11. The NMM will provide a full response in writing to the complainant within 28 days (subject to the restrictions outlined in the notes below). The designated Trustee is copied in
12. Unresolved concerns/complaints will be passed to the Chair of Trustees
13. College will be informed when a concern/complaint has been resolved, and when a concern/complaint has been passed to the Chair of Trustees
14. The designated Trustee will contact the complainant to solicit confidential feedback on the way the concern/complaint has been handled
15. If a complaint remains unresolved, complainants may seek further advice from the following organisations or regulators: The Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship, The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Education Scotland, or the Care Inspectorate (Early Years).

Timeline

1. Following acknowledgement of a concern/complaint, the NMM will update the complainant in writing within 7 days (subject to the restrictions outlined in the notes below), and copy in the School Coordinator and the designated Trustee

2. A full response will be provided, if possible, within 28 days (subject to the restrictions outlined in the notes below). If the concern/complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the matter will be passed to the Chair of Trustees

Complaints policy: notes and guidance for parents

These notes establish the responsibilities of both complainants and the School, and highlight a number of points of process of which complainants should be aware:

- In all cases, complainants should follow the Complaints Procedure set out in the School's complaints policy
- Complaints are different from 'concerns,' which may be less serious and will not necessarily trigger a formal process
- Complaints and concerns will be acknowledged, in writing (normally by email), within two working days of receipt
- A complaint will normally be deemed 'formal' when it is submitted in writing (including email) and where there is a request for action to be taken
- Complainants should be aware that written, formal complaints—the email or letter of complaint itself—may be shared with the person or people who are the subject of the complaint, and/or with the School's legal or personnel consultants
- Formal complaints will be monitored at every stage by a designated member of the Board of Trustees
- Given the sensitive nature of complaints, the legal complications that can arise from them, and the high levels of emotion that sometimes attend them, complainants are strongly advised to restrict the content of any written complaint only to the matter at hand. Content should be factual and relevant; intemperate language, repetition of hearsay, references to unresolved past events or unsubstantiated or unrelated accusations should be avoided, as these could lead to accusations of defamation
- The receipt of a complaint will normally result in an investigation, which will take time
- Any investigation, and any action arising it, will be undertaken by the Management Group. The Management Group has been advised that it cannot update complainants on the detailed progress of the complaint once the process underway
- Clarification or further information may be sought from the complainant at the outset or at any point during the investigation

- Within 7 days of receipt, the complainant should be provided with an update, including an estimated time frame, an indication of how the complaint will be investigated, and roughly when or whether it is expected to be resolved
- Complainants should receive a final communication, normally within 28 days, to inform them when the issue that motivated the complaint has been addressed or resolved. However, the Management Group has been advised that it may not provide complainants with the details of any action taken in respect of members of staff, pupils or any other party involved in the complaint
- Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome or decision made, or with the action taken or proposed by the Management Group, an appeal can be made to the Chair of Trustees in writing