

Policy and Guidance:	Date approved	May 2018
	Date for review	May 2020
	Complaints Policy & Procedures – Inspired Directions School	

1. Aims

This Policy and the procedures for its implementation aim to explain the way in which complaints are managed at the Inspired Directions School

2. Context

Inspire operates within guidance and procedures set out by DfE, as outlined in regulation 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 as amended by The education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012

3. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of School in accordance with the annual cycle of school improvement planning. Circumstances may require more frequent modifications. The Head of School will keep records of all complaints that pass beyond Stage 1 and are dealt with by the Head of School and/or Inspire! Director.

4. Complaints Procedure - Parents/Carers

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures. The procedure is divided into four stages;

- 4.1. **Stage 1:** The Informal stage aims to resolve the concern through informal contact with the teacher or the Head of School
- 4.2. **Stage 2:** The first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Head of School or the Director
- 4.3. **Stage 3:** Once Stage 2 has been exhausted, complaints will be addressed by an appeal panel of Trustees
- 4.4. **Stage 4:** Appeal to the Department for Education if the Trustees are unable to resolve the complaint

5. Stage 1: Informal Stage

- 5.1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known. The first point of contact should be the Engagement Coordinator or Head of School
- 5.2. Once your concern is made known to us, we will see you, or contact you by telephone, by email, or in writing, **within 24 hours**. He or she will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up

- 5.3. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed will be communicated clearly and we will confirm this in writing to you
- 5.4. If necessary, we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern
- 5.5. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries within **10 working days**. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further
- 5.6. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage

6. **Stage 2: Formal Consideration**

- 6.1. This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above.
- 6.2. Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the Head of School. If, however, your complaint concerns the Head of School personally, it should be addressed to the Inspire! Director
- 6.3. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within **3 working days**. The Head of School may appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate your complaint
- 6.4. We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement
- 6.5. Normally we would expect to respond in full within a further **15 working days**, but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response
- 6.6. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint
- 6.7. The Head of School, or the Director of Inspire! may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish
- 6.8. Following the meeting, the Head of School, Investigating Officer and Director of Inspire! will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question
- 6.9. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or carer not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present
- 6.10. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law
- 6.11. The Head of School or Director of Inspire! will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation

- 6.12. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint within **15 working days**. If this is not possible we will write to you to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when you will be provided with a full response. This will give an explanation of the Head of School's or the Director of Inspire!'s decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you
- 6.13. The Director of Inspire! may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point
- 6.14. If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3

7. **Stage 3: Appeal Panel**

- 7.1. If the complaint has already been through Stage 2 and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to an Appeal Panel. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level
- 7.2. The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a Panel of 3 people appointed by Inspire! who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case nor any direct involvement in previous consideration of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice
- 7.3. However, the aim of a Panel is not to rehear the complaint: it will not go through the case again. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly and that correct procedure has been followed. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.
- 7.4. The Appeal Panel operates according to the following formal procedures:
 - 7.4.1. The Director of Inspire! (as the school proprietor) will convene a panel consisting of at least of two trustees and/or school governors. The Director of Inspire! will arrange for the Panel meeting to take place within **15 working days** of receiving your request to review the process. Your request for a review should be lodged with Inspire!'s Chair of Trustees within **5 working days** of receiving the School's response to your initial complaint
 - 7.4.2. You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal
 - 7.4.3. The Director of Inspire! will be asked to prepare a written report for the Panel. The Panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary
 - 7.4.4. You will be informed, at least **5 working days** in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting and will be invited to attend. We hope you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer

- 7.4.5. With the letter, you will receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding Stage 2 and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the Panel
- 7.4.6. The letter will explain what will happen at the Panel meeting and that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish
- 7.4.7. If it is necessary in the interests of the ratifying the investigative process, the Director of Inspire! may, with the agreement of the Chair of the Panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
- 7.4.8. The Chair of the Panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
- 7.4.9. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
- 7.4.10. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the Minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the Panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy as the Minutes are the property of the Governing Body. Since such Minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature
- 7.4.11. Normally, the written outcome of the Panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the Minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the Panel is happy for the Minutes to be copied to you, the Clerk can then be asked to maintain confidentiality in the Minutes.
- 7.4.12. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
- The Panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at Stage 2
 - The Panel to hear the Director of Inspire!'s case in response
 - You to raise questions via the Chair
 - You to be questioned by the Director of Inspire! through the Chair
 - The Panel members to be able to question you and the Director of Inspire!
 - You and the Director of Inspire! to make a final statement

- 7.4.13. In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the Panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Head of School **within 3 school days**. All participants other than the Panel and the Clerk will then leave.
- 7.4.14. The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the case;
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary;
 - recommend, where appropriate, to the Board of Trustees changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again
- 7.4.15. The Clerk will send you and the Director of Inspire! a letter outlining the decision of the Panel.
- 7.4.16. We will keep a copy of all correspondence, statements and records of complaints and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records. See section 10 for further details on the confidentiality of records, statements, correspondence etc.

8. **Stage 4: Appeal to the Department of Education**

- 8.1. If you wish to pursue your complaint beyond Stage 3, you can write to either the Department for Education or OFSTED. Further details can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

9. **Closure of Complaints**

- 9.1. Very occasionally, Inspire! may feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied for sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. In such circumstances it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree."
- 9.2. If a complainant persists in making representations to the School – to the Head of School, the Director of Inspire!, Chair of Trustees or anyone else this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.
- 9.3. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process.
- 9.4. In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage 3 of the procedures described in this document. This is because an Complaints Appeal takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint.
- 9.5. The Chair of Trustees may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a Complaints Appeal Review Panel would not help to move things forward.

- 9.6. In such circumstances the complainant has, of course, the right to proceed to Stage 4 and appeal to the Department of Education or OFSTED.
- 9.7. A copy of the findings of any judgement will be sent to the complainant and the person complained about.

10. **Confidentiality**

- 10.1. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential
- 10.2. Sensitive doc
- 10.3. Documents are retained in a locked cupboard and electronic documentation is kept on a secure dedicated drive specifically to meet the needs of the school.
Notes will include details of whether the complaint was dealt with at stage 1, 2 or 3. Records will be kept available for inspection purposes

Appendix 1:

Inspire Complaints Recording Form

1. Personal details

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Daytime telephone number.....

Evening telephone number.....

If applicable, name of child(ren) and year at school:

.....

Your relationship to the school, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of the public, student:

.....

2. Details of Complaint

2.1. Please give details of your complaint: Please be specific.

2.2. What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
Who did you speak to, when and what was the response

2.3. What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature

.....

Date

.....

3. Official Use:

3.1. Date of acknowledgment

.....

3.2. By whom

.....

3.3. Complaint referred to

.....

3.4. Date

.....

Appendix 3: Number of Complaints Registered Under Formal Procedure

Academic Year	Number of Complaints	Number of Complaints Resolved
2016-2017	0	0
2017-2018	0	0