



North Star School

Compliments and Complaints Policy

September 2021

Review date: September 2022

Parents, carers, and others may complain directly to North Star School, if they are unhappy with any aspect of the education or care provided, by contacting the Directors:

Chelsea Mallabone and Emily Bedford
info@northstar-school.com

All complaints are taken seriously and dealt with without delay and our aim is to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Any person who is the subject of a formal complaint will not be responsible for resolving or responding to it.

We are happy to provide access to an advocate so that a complainant may be supported.

At each stage of the process, the complaint will be dealt with, if possible, within 10 days of the referral being made. An extension to this limit may be agreed where necessary. However, all complaints will be fully responded to, in writing, within a maximum of 28 days and the complainant kept informed of the progress.

Stage One: Informal Resolution

Stage Two: Formal Complaint

Stage Three: Complaints Panel

If you are not satisfied with our response and feel it is right to take the matter outside of North Star School, the following is a possible contact point:

- the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street. Manchester. M1 2WD. Telephone 0300 123 1231 Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction



North Star School recognises its duty under the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and any community facilities or services, the school provides.

North Star School acknowledges the obligations associated with the Children Act 1989, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010. We also follow current DfE guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (2020), 'Working together to safeguard children' (2018) HM Government advice 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2015) and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's policies, procedures, guidance, and protocols.

This policy and all associated procedures apply to all staff (including consultants, agency staff, volunteers, students on placement and any other individual working for, or on behalf of North Star School), children and visitors.

Failure to comply with these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action, which might include summary dismissal (and referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA), where appropriate) or termination of agreement or contract.

Definitions

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A 'complaint' may be defined as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures. We take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect and encourage all our staff to tell us as soon as they become aware of any circumstances that could give rise - or be seen to give rise - to a conflict of interest in responding to a complaint (whether or not the parties to a complaint have raised the potential conflict). In any such circumstances, the member of staff will be expected to withdraw from the process, and the complaint passed to someone else to investigate and/or consider.



Compliments

We ensure that compliments received from children, staff, parents, carers, local authorities and others are properly recorded, acknowledged (where appropriate) and conveyed to the individuals being thanked and to all other interested parties.

A compliment may refer to children or staff and may relate to an individual, a group/team or the school, as a whole.

Compliments and expressions of appreciation are valuable in monitoring the effectiveness of our provision and can provide useful learning points and examples of good practice, which should be shared throughout the organisation.

An individual wishing to make a compliment can do so either:

- In-person
- By e-mail to: info@northstar-school.com

Children are free to express their compliments and gratitude by drawing pictures, designing/writing cards, poems etc.

All compliments should be brought to the attention of the Directors, who will, in turn, ensure such feedback is acknowledged (where appropriate) and conveyed to all interested parties.

A record of all compliments should be maintained and where a specific individual is identified, a record will be entered in their personal file

Complaints procedure for children

All children are provided with information about their right to complain, how to complain and what happens when they complain, during their induction and are reminded of the procedures as necessary.

Children can also elect to telephone, or send a letter of complaint directly and unopened to:

- the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street. Manchester. M1 2WD. Telephone 0300 123 1231 Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- The Office of the Children's Commissioner (Help at Hand) (for children in care, leaving care, living away from home) Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London. SW1P 3BT Telephone: 0800 528 0731 Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk (9.00 am – 5.00



pm Monday to Friday)

- an officer of the referring authority
- an independent advocate/visitor of the child

Our aim is to resolve complaints, wherever possible, to the satisfaction of the child.

Children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support and without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. No action will be taken against a child making a complaint, simply because they have made a complaint.

Any person who is the subject of a formal complaint is not allowed to take any responsibility for resolving or responding to the complaint. Children may be accompanied by another person to support them when making a complaint. At each stage of the process, the complaint will be dealt with, if possible, within 10 days of the referral being made. An extension to this limit may be agreed where necessary.

Complaints concerning allegations of child abuse or safeguarding must be referred to children's social care and the referring authority. If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the Directors will consider whether any sanction is appropriate against the child who made it.

In addition to the other methods for making complaints, as described above, children have been informed about Childline and telephone numbers for the following organisations are displayed in a prominent position:

- Childline (Childline is a service provided by NSPCC)
- the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- The Office of the Children's Commissioner – 'Help at Hand'; and
- Children's social care (Office Hours and Out of Hours).

The electronic complaints log and a copy of this policy document are kept on the school server and both are open to inspection by officers from placing local authorities and the DfE. The record will state whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing, include details of any action taken by the setting as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld) and the outcome of any investigation. The referring authority will always be informed of any complaint that is reported to an external agency, parents or carers; and a specific named person will be consulted immediately and invited to take part in any discussions that ensue.



Complaints procedure for parents, carers, significant others, independent advocates, officers from referring authorities, external bodies and members of the public

Any of the above may complain directly to North Star School, in person, in writing or by telephone, if they are unhappy with any aspect of the education or care provided, by contacting:

Chelsea Mallabone and Emily Bedford (Directors)

info@northstar-school.com

We are happy to provide access to an advocate so that a complainant may be supported.

At each stage of the process, the complaint will be dealt with, if possible, within 10 days of the referral being made. An extension to this limit may be agreed where necessary. However, all complaints will be fully responded to, in writing, within a maximum of 28 days and the complainant kept informed of the progress.

The complainant will also be advised of any escalation options available, at each stage of the procedure e.g. when communicating the outcome of the stage one process, the complainant will be given details of the stage two process etc.

Stage one: Informal Resolution

Where an individual wishes to make a complaint in person or by telephone, a senior member of staff will take reasonable steps to resolve the complaint directly, but any complainant may have the matter pursued further, if not satisfied with the proposed informal resolution. If the complaint is resolved at this stage, it should still be recorded in the electronic complaints log.

Stage Two: Formal Complaint

The complainant will always be asked what they think might resolve the issue at the earliest stage, but if they are not satisfied with the proposed informal resolution, including acknowledgement simply that the setting could have handled the situation better, the complaint should be recorded (in writing or by other means) and given to the Director. If a complaint is received in writing (by email or post), the complaint will be addressed in accordance with our formal complaints procedure. The Directors will take all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Should this not happen, the complainant is entitled to take the matter forward to Stage 3.

Stage Three: Complaints Panel



A complaint will then be considered by a panel of at least three, suitably skilled, people who were not directly involved in earlier consideration of the complaint including:

- A Director of North Star School
- A person independent of the management and running of North Star School e.g. independent visitor/advocate, an officer of the local authority etc.

Members of the panel must not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; and written consent must be obtained from the complainant, before disclosing information to a third party. The complainant may attend and can be accompanied at a panel if they wish. The date, time and venue should be set at a mutually convenient time for all parties. Three possible dates will be offered (if required) to the complainant, but if these all fail to be suitable then the meeting may be conducted in private by the complaints panel.

The findings and recommendations of the panel will be given to the complainant, the Directors and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made.

Urgent action will also be taken to improve practice, services and outcomes, where appropriate; and feedback will always be sought from the complainant about their experience of using North Star Schools services.

Multi-agency partnership

We work closely with social care, the police, health services and other agencies; and where another public body is investigating aspects of a complaint raised with North Star School, consideration will be given to extending the relevant timescales or suspending the complaints process, until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If a complainant commences legal action against North Star School, in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, in respect of their complaint, until such legal proceedings have concluded.

Withdrawal of a complaint

An individual may choose to withdraw a complaint at any stage of the process.

A decision to withdraw the complaint must be made in writing and submitted to the Directors. In these circumstances, North Star School may continue to investigate the matter, if the information provided constitutes a cause for concern.



Implementation, monitoring and review

The designated senior members of staff with overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 'Compliments and Complaints Policy' is the Directors.

All children and staff are informed about this policy during their induction and are reminded of the procedures as necessary. The views and experiences of children, parents, carers, local authorities and staff are also sought as part of the review process through existing mechanisms for consultation and feedback. Records are kept of these enquiries as well as any associated actions.