

Christians and Sheffield Schools (CaSS)

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE OF CHRISTIANS AND SHEFFIELD SCHOOLS

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1. General Principles

It is the policy of Christians and Sheffield Schools to ensure that all people have access to a procedure to help resolve any complaints quickly and fairly.

This policy is separate from the Grievance procedures available to employees / staff members, and is intended for all other people. It may be amended at any time.

Any steps under this procedure should be taken promptly unless there is a good reason for delay. The time limits in this procedure may be extended if it is reasonable to do so.

The procedure may be discontinued if it becomes impracticable for either party to continue with it.

If a person has a difficulty at any stage of the procedure because of a disability, s/he should ask any employee or Trustee for assistance.

Information and proceedings relating to a complaint will remain confidential as far as is possible. In addition, every effort will be made to keep all information relating to the complaints process transparent to both parties with due regard to confidentiality.

2. Application

This procedure applies to any complaint apart from issues outside the control of Christians and Sheffield Schools.

3. General Considerations

All people have the right to proceed with the Complaints Procedure provided the conditions laid out below are adhered to.

- A person cannot pursue the same complaint more than once.
- If an employee or Trustee has an involvement in a formal complaint, the matter should be referred to another Trustee.
- If a complaint is shared by more than one person, the complaint may be presented by one or more representatives of that group.

- A person should not delay in formally making a complaint, and must always do so within one month of the event.
- Some complaints may need extra time for either party to seek advice or for the person investigating the complaint to undertake an objective analysis of all the facts, so the parties may, by mutual agreement, modify the time limits set out in this procedure.
- There is no limit to the number of separate complaints which may be brought by one person. If a complaint is resolved, and the action which caused it occurs again, the person may make a fresh complaint.
- A person may withdraw a complaint at any stage in this procedure by informing Christians and Sheffield Schools in writing.

4. Making Complaints Informally

Most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with the employee or Trustee concerned. If the complainant feels unable to speak to the employee or Trustee, for example, because the complaint concerns him or her, then the complainant should speak informally to another employee or Trustee. In some cases consideration should be given to inviting a third party as an external counsellor/mediator or an advisor. If this does not resolve the problem the complainant should follow the standard procedure below.

5. Mediation

Every effort must be made to resolve the issue(s) which are the basis of any complaint informally as early as possible. But, if this is not possible and the complaint proceeds to the formal stage, either party may request mediation. This means that an independent person will work with both parties to try to resolve the matters informally. Mediation will take place when one party requests it, and it is agreed by the other party. Complaints may be referred to mediation at any stage in the procedure. If mediation takes place, the timescale for initiating action under this procedure will be suspended while the mediator tries to resolve the matter.

6. Making a formal complaint

You should make a formal complaint in writing and submit it to an employee or Trustee. The complaint should contain a description of the reasons for your complaint, along with any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved.

In some situations we may need to ask you to clarify the subject matter of your complaint in advance of the investigation.

7. Next steps and timescales

You will receive a written response to your complaint, normally within no more than two weeks after Christians and Sheffield Schools has received your written complaint. Christians and Sheffield Schools may carry out investigations which are considered appropriate prior to replying. This may involve interviewing you and any witnesses considered necessary. You may bring a friend to any of the meetings under this procedure (see paragraph 9). You should bear in mind the following points:

- You must take all reasonable steps to attend any meetings. If you cannot attend at the time specified for a meeting, you should inform Christians and Sheffield Schools immediately so that reasonable efforts can be made to agree an alternative time.
- If any necessary investigations require a longer timescale you will be informed of this.

8. Appeals Procedure

Should you wish to appeal against the written response, you should do so in writing to the Chair of the Trustees, stating your grounds of appeal, within 2 weeks. You should give as much detail as possible about why you are dissatisfied with the decision. The Chair of the Trustees will ask the person who conducted the investigation to prepare a statement responding to your appeal. This, together with any documents relating to the complaint and your statement of appeal, will be available for the Chair of Trustees.

An appeal meeting will be held, normally no more than two weeks after the Chair of Trustees has received your appeal. The appeal has the following key features:

- You may bring a friend to the appeal meeting.
- The appeal will be heard by the Chair of Trustees.

The procedure to be followed at the appeal hearing will be:

1. You will present your appeal, setting out clearly the reasons why you do not agree with the findings of the initial response.
2. The Chair of the Trustees may ask you questions.
3. Any other parties present may ask you questions
4. The person who carried out the original investigation will explain the reasons for reaching the notified decision.
5. The Chair of the Trustees may ask questions of the original investigator.
6. You may ask questions of the original investigator.
7. Other parties present at the hearing may then be questioned by either the Chair of the Trustees or you.
8. You will then have the opportunity to sum up.
9. The Chair of the Trustees will then withdraw to consider the evidence.

The final decision of the Chair of the Trustees will be notified to you in writing within two weeks of the appeal meeting, and full reasons will be given. There is no further internal right of appeal.

9. The Right to be Accompanied

You may bring a friend to any meetings held under this procedure.

A solicitor or legal representative is not permitted, nor is anyone who may have a conflict of interest, or whose presence may prejudice the meeting. We may also ask you to choose someone else if a meeting would have to be delayed for over five working days because your friend is unavailable.