

## Concerns / Complaints Procedure

Policy Reviewed: November 2021  
Next Policy Review Date: November 2022

### Procedure for Raising Questions and Points of Concern/Complaints

#### Raising Questions

We believe in close cooperation with everyone involved in the School Community and we aim to work through full and open discussion.

To this end we hold a number of Parents' Evenings – a minimum of one per class per term – in addition to occasional meetings called to discuss specific issues. Class Teachers also aim to make themselves available so that matters can be raised with them. The school newsletter is available as a means of communication for the whole school community.

There are also certain groups that enable points of view to be considered. Meetings of School Parents, Teachers and Friends provide a forum for a range of issues to be discussed freely and informally. The Eskdale Community Trust Council carries the legal responsibility for the school and delegates educational and most management matters to the College of Teachers, which meets weekly during term time.

#### Concerns and Complaints

##### General

We aim to provide good quality teaching and pastoral care, but if you have a concern or complaint you can expect it to be dealt with as follows. We will try to resolve matters quickly and informally. We will seek to learn from the process and to avoid any possibility of any discrimination being associated with making a complaint. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept securely and confidentially, except in so far as disclosure is required by law or required in the course of the school's inspection. Written records will be kept of all formal complaints showing at which stage of the procedure they were resolved. In practice it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish the expression of a concern from a more general point being made in conversation or from a subject being suggested as suitable for discussion at one of the meetings referred to above; please therefore, if you are expressing a concern or making a complaint, try to avoid any ambiguity about this.

Concerns relating to the welfare or abuse of a child should immediately be reported to the school's child protection officer, to the local Social Services Department or to the Police (see Child protection policy.)

##### First Point of Contact

If you have a concern or complaint, please make initial contact with the school as follows:

Subject Teachers – Matters concerning specific subjects taught

Class Teachers – Matters concerning

- a teaching carried out by the Class Teacher
- b the Class generally

c individual children in the Class

Administrator – Matters relating to Finance, Maintenance, Health and Safety

College Chair – Matters concerning decisions of the College of Teachers  
– Educational Policies  
– Communications Matters

The Eskdale Trust Council Chair – Matters concerning decisions of the Council

## **The Path for Concerns and Complaints**

Stage One – Informal Resolution - It is hoped that a matter will be resolved informally with the first point of contact indicated above, by discussion on a one to one basis or by calling an informal meeting involving a third person to provide an objective listening ear. The first point of contact will be responsible for making, and filing, a brief, agreed written record of the concern/complaint, and the date it was received, and for showing the record to all the people involved. If the matter is not resolved within seven days, then the complainant(s) will be advised to proceed in accordance with Stage Two below. If for any reason the complainant feels unable to approach the first point of contact, then the complainant should speak with one of the school's Designated Complaints Persons (DCPs) who will facilitate a meeting with the relevant person. It is the DCP's responsibility to follow up concerns and ensure that agreed action is implemented.

Stage Two – Formal Resolution – With assistance from the DCP the complainant(s) should put the complaint in writing to the College of Teachers via the College Chair. The complaint will be read out to the College of Teachers, which will treat the matter as confidential and will decide the most appropriate course of action. In most cases the College of Teachers will organise a meeting with the complainant(s) within seven days of hearing the complaint. The complainant(s) will be encouraged to bring a companion to the meeting for support. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the College of Teachers to carry out further investigations and to call further meetings. The DCP will be responsible for ensuring that dated written records are made of all meetings and interviews held concerning the complaint and shown to all the people involved. When the College of Teachers is satisfied that, as far as practicable, all relevant facts have been established, the College will make a decision and inform the complainant(s) of the decision, and the reasons for it, in writing. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision or feels that Stage Two is unreasonably protracted, then the complainant should invoke Stage Three as follows.

Stage Three – Mediation Group Hearing – The complainant(s) should write to the Chair of the Eskdale Community Trust Council who will refer the matter to the Mediation Group appointed by the Eskdale Community Trust Council. The Mediation Group will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. The Mediation Group will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as possible, normally within seven days. If the Mediation Group deems it necessary, it may require further particulars of the complaint or any related matters to be supplied to all parties in writing no later than three days prior to the hearing. One other person, a relative, teacher or friend, may accompany the complainant(s) to the hearing, but legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If possible the Mediation Group will resolve the complaint immediately, but if the Mediation Group decides to carry out further investigations, it will make a decision (and may make recommendations) Eskdale Community Trust for Education

within seven days of the hearing. The Mediation Group will write to the complainant(s) giving details of the decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Mediation Group will be final. The Mediation Group's findings and any recommendations it makes will be communicated in writing to the College of Teachers, to the Eskdale Community Trust Council and, if relevant, to the person(s) at whom the complaint was directed; a copy will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Eskdale Trust Council and the Chair of the College of Teachers. Where necessary, the Mediation Group will make reference to the school's disciplinary procedure.

### **Other Agencies**

If you wish to refer a complaint to school's regulator, contact details for Ofsted and for the School Inspection Service, which currently inspects the school, are available on the school website.

### **Habitual or Vexatious Complainants**

A complainant may be deemed habitual or vexatious if previous contact with them indicates that they persist in pursuing a complaint when the school's complaints procedure has been properly implemented and exhausted, continually raise new or trivial issues, refuse to accept documented evidence of action, do not clearly define the issues to be investigated, place unreasonable demands on staff time, record meetings or conversations without consent, threaten or use physical violence, or resort to harassment or verbal abuse. A decision will be made by the Chair of the Eskdale Community Trust Council, after consultation with the DCPs and the Chair of the College of Teachers, or by the Mediation Group if a complaint is mainly about the Chair of the Council. This classification will be used only in exceptional circumstances when all reasonable measures have been taken to resolve complaints.

Where complainants have been identified as habitual or vexatious the Eskdale Community Trust Council will be notified in writing, decide what action to take and review the complainant's status every six months. A complainant who disputes his/her status may appeal to the Mediation Group.

A habitual or vexatious complainant may be dealt with in one or more of the following ways:

- Withdrawal of contact in person, by telephone, by email, by fax and/or by letter, or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained
- Restriction of contact to liaison through a designated person
- Notification that any form of contact in relation to a complaint, or further complaints, is at an end and that further contact received will be acknowledged but not answered
- Suspension or termination of the contract with the school
- Legal action.

### **Complaints received**

We received no complaints in the academic year September 2020 – August 2021

#### **Endorsement:**

**Name:** Linda Parker

**Position:** Chair of ECTE

**Date:** 11/11/2021