

# Greenfields School

## Policy for

### Complaints Procedure



*To be read in conjunction with the Tri-X policy for Childhood First*

- I. In accordance with legislation and Regulations Greenfields School has an additional procedure for dealing with complaints about any aspect of practice or policy within the School about which a concerned person is dissatisfied.

Such a concerned person may be a child, parents/care givers, or any Agency or its representative who is involved with the placement and is recognised by the School and family as having sufficient interest in the welfare of a child.

The focus of complaints is likely to be what we do or do not do for a child in the major aspects of our work, namely care, education and work with families.

- II. This complaints procedure is an internal process. Other courses of action may be taken at the same time (e.g. Using the relevant Local Authority Complaints Procedure, or the School Child Protection, Disciplinary or Grievance Procedures).
- III. Any action related to dealing with a complaint at the School is taken according to the following principles -

- 1) First and foremost, as in all activity, actions and decisions must be taken with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.
- 2) Actions will always be taken within the clearly identified time limits laid out below.
- 3) All actions undertaken and findings and decisions made and agreed will be recorded and provided in writing to all involved parties.
- 4) Greenfields School will keep a placing authority informed and involved when a formal complaint is being dealt with.

The complaints procedure has two main objectives. First, to ensure the opportunity for redress if a concerned person is dissatisfied by the response to any concerns they may have raised or if a person has felt disregarded or even treated badly when attempting to pursue a complaint. Second, to solve any disagreements in a way that ensures the highest possibility of mutual agreement about any complaints or problems and their solution.

- IV. The nominated person for receiving formal complaints and co-ordinating all aspects of their proper processing is the Head Teacher. If a complaint is against this person, and if it leads to a serious conflict of interest, the Director of Greenfields would assume these responsibilities.

These responsibilities are:

- a) Ensuring that all persons are aware of the existence, purpose and process of the complaints procedure.
- b) Receiving any complaint which a person wishes to make.
- c) When receiving complaints, finding out the outcome required by the complainant.
- c) Ensuring that the complaint is recorded either through a written statement by a complainant or by writing down a statement agreed by that person and supplying a copy to the complainant.
- d) Informing the Director of Greenfields and The Gables and all relevant people of the complaint and the process under way.
- e) Ensuring the recording and communicating of information, conclusions and decisions in writing at all stages.

V. **The stages for Dealing with a Complaint at Greenfields School**

Stage I:

A. **Informal Resolution:**

1. Issues should be resolved through open and honest communication
  2. Individual discussions can be used to resolve problems
  3. Group meetings can be used to resolve problems
  4. All Staff members are responsible for helping children find appropriate ways to resolve problems
  5. Meetings can be arranged with the Headteacher in her role as Complaints Officer
  6. Supervision and line management can be used to resolve problems
  7. Consultation can be used to resolve problems
  8. Greenfields House Visiting Advocate from Voice for the Child in Care, can be used to resolve problems.
- B. **Formal Complaints**

If after efforts to resolve a complaint in this informal, problem solving way, or if a person making a complaint does not wish to use such methods, a formal complaint can be made, even if less formal problem solving continues thereafter as anticipated in regulations.

This formal element has two stages to the procedure.

#### Stage II:

- 1 The complaint is to be written and submitted to the Headteacher (or she will ensure that the complaint is recorded accurately)

All relevant parties will be notified within 24 hours.

The Headteacher will also ensure that alongside information, adequate support is available for all parties to the complaint.

- 2 Access to a VCC advocate if a child needs help to make a complaint

An independent person will be provided as an entirely objective element in the process. This person will consider the complaint in the light of all information available (time scale: the person will be notified within 48 hours and begin the work within 5 working days)

An independent person is neither involved in the management or operation of the School nor is financially interested in its operation nor the spouse or relation of any person so involved.

The independent person may interview the child, the parents or other involved persons including relevant members of staff. He/she should take part in all discussions that take place about the complaint. He/she should be given access (with permission of all involved) to relevant parts of any case records.

The School as a part of Childhood First has entered into an agreement through the Charterhouse Group of Therapeutic Communities, of which it is a member, to secure such an independent person from the independent organisation "Voice for the Child in Care".

- 3 This independent person will consider all the information received and respond with a formal written notification of conclusions and recommendations within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint.

The nominated person will then ensure that all parties involved receive a written statement of that decision. This will occur within 3 days of receipt. Response by the School as to what, if any, action will be taken by the School, must be made and circulated to all parties within a further 3 days.

- 4 Along with this response there will be supplied a statement giving information on further options should the complainant be dissatisfied still. This information will include advice as to the right to have the complaint considered further by a panel of three people consisting of at least 3 people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, which will also incorporate a further independent element different from the independent person acting in Stage I.

#### Stage III:

- 1 If the person who has complained remains dissatisfied with the conclusion and recommendations, he/she may request that a panel be convened to consider the matter further. This request is to be made in writing within 28 days of receipt of notice of the recommendations. A chair for the panel will be identified through consensus.
- 2 This panel will convene within 21 days of a receipt of a request to do so. Its composition will be: one member of the Board of Trustees; one VCC independent person and one other independent person who knows the school but is not involved in its management.

The person making the complaints and/or a chosen representative can attend the panel meeting and make written and oral statements. So too can the independent person from Stage I and any other recognised interested party.

Upon receiving and hearing all submissions the panel will meet on its own to deliberate. This may well require meetings in addition to the first.

Within 24 hours of the completion of deliberations, the panel will inform all parties in writing of its conclusions and recommendations.

On receipt of this report, the School will determine what action to take in its light. The School will circulate an action plan within 14 days.

If the person complaining remains dissatisfied still he/she may contact a legal adviser.

This person or his representative may then decide to establish a forum in which participants agree beforehand to accept as binding any recommendations made.

**VI. The types of problems that may be complained about are likely to include:**

- i) Unfair treatment by members of staff or other children;
- ii) Problems relating to basic needs;
- iii) Unacceptable punishment;
- iv) Unfair treatment as a result of rules and regulations;
- v) Decisions that affect a child's life/learning;
- vi) The way in which a decision has been made;
- vii) Delay in making a decision or putting plans into action;
- viii) Concerns about family, relatives or friends;
- ix) Inappropriate restrictions on a child;
- x) Preventing normal activities outside the school;
- xi) Racism or sexism.

**VII. Monitoring of complaints procedure**

A complaints book will be kept up to date by the Head Teacher. This will be kept in the Secretary's Office to ensure that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except for the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Any information regarding a particular child will be transferred to his/her file.

Each complaint received is registered with the following details:

- 1) The name of the person making the complaint;
- 2) The date and time of receiving the complaint;
- 3) The nature of the complaint;
- 4) Actions taken;
- 5) The outcome of each stage of a procedure;
- 6) An indication of whether the specified time limits have been met;
- 7) The date by which any procedure is completed.

This information will then be used to monitor the standard of work at Greenfields School and to provide information about, for example, training needs, the effectiveness of practice and policy, and need for any changes and developments.

For such review purposes the names of any person will either be omitted or altered to preserve anonymity. This information will be made available to Human Resources and those responsible for the inspection of the School.

Comments on the effectiveness of the procedures will be sought from users and professional persons involved in the process.

### VIII. **Flow chart to outcome of complaints procedure at Greenfields School**

i) As part of the referral process the parents, carers and/or professional people involved will be given information about how to make a formal complaint. The child him/herself will also be told in language understandable and appropriate to the age and stage about what to do when they are worried or concerned about the way they have been treated. A copy of the complaints procedure will be made available at the time of referral, and any time thereafter.



ii) When a child has a problem he/she is advised to discuss the matter with a member of staff.



If a parent, carer or professional person has a concern, they too are advised to discuss it with a Senior member of staff.



iii) If the difficulty is not sorted out to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint within 5 working days, that person will be reminded of his/her right to make a formal complaint.



iv) When a formal complaint is made, an independent person will look into the complaint. This may take up to 4 weeks.



v) When a decision has been made about the complaint all parties will be informed in writing.



vi) If the person who has made the complaint is still not happy with the proposed outcome he/she will be advised of his/her rights to have the complaint considered further by a panel of three people.



vii) The person complaining must send in a written request for a panel to examine the complaint. This must be received by the nominated officer at the School, the Deputy Director, within 4 weeks of receipt of the recommendations from the independent person.



viii) The panel will meet within 21 days of receiving the request.



ix) A decision will be reached after meeting and hearing all submissions. Once a decision and recommendations are reached, this information will be communicated to all parties within 24 hours.



x) On receipt of the panel report, Greenfields School will determine what actions to take. Any actions decided in the light of these recommendations will be made within 14 days.



xi) When advised of this if the person complaining remains dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may contact a legal adviser.

### **Complaints over Treatment**

Being unhappy or even angry or upset does not necessarily mean you should make a formal complaint. Try to sort it out with the help of those whom you believe really do care about you here at the School.

A formal complaint is about something really very serious, like when you feel you are harshly treated or feel what is done to you or said about you is terribly unfair. If people then don't listen and try to sort it out with you, you have a right to complain. The Headteacher is responsible for this and will make sure that it will be safe for you to do this.

There is a Childhood First Policy on Tri-X which should be read in conjunction with this policy.