



St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home

Compliments, Worries, Complaints and Appeals Policy

Person Responsible: Director of Education

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The aim of this policy is to ensure that St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home provides consistent attention to worries and complaints of the Children and Young People (or a member of staff or volunteer on his/her behalf), parents/carers, Local Authorities and other individuals/organisations with an interest in St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home.

It is important to understand the difference between a complaint and a worry to ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

At first it may be unclear as to whether the individual is raising a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. An initial discussion with either the Head of School or Registered Manager may help to clarify and decide the next steps.

Please note that any complaints relating to safeguarding concerns of children and/or young people, will be managed via the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure. The School and Children's Home staff trained as Designated Safeguarding Leads. These include the Head of School and Registered Manager for the Children's Home. Local Authority Safeguarding teams may become involved.

What is a complaint?

We see a complaint as any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or a perceived injustice or grievance about the standard of service, actions or where our initial response to a problem has not proven satisfactory.

Complaints are a constructive and valuable source of information and enable areas for improvement and change to be identified, so we can stay at the forefront of service provision.

The way in which a complaint is received, addressed and resolved also enables judgements about our performance as a service provider to be made. We will endeavour to resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity.

Staff grievances, Whistleblowing, Disciplinary procedures and Capability/Performance Management fall outside of this complaints procedure.

We do not consider a query or request for a service, or a problem arising between children and/or young people as a complaint, unless the complainant has a reason to complain about the way in which we are dealing with the situation.

We cannot respond to anonymous complaints but we will use comments and feedback to help influence and improve services.

Complaints that have or are being/ or likely to be dealt with in legal proceedings, contractual processes or third parties are unable to be dealt with by St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home. Wherever possible we will refer you to the appropriate organisation to deal with your complaint.

Once a complaint has been made it can be withdrawn at any time by the complainant.

Enabling Children and Young People to raise worries and complaints

Children and Young People who attend St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home have a right to voice their worries and complaints and for these to be taken seriously.

On admittance to the School and Children's Home, Children and Young People are provided with either a Children's version and/or a pictorial version of how to raise a worry or complaint.

We recognise that Children and Young People may require support to make a complaint. The involvement of an Independent external Advocate, can be facilitated where appropriate.

We will also enable Children and Young People to access the complaints procedure of the placing Local Authority if they so wish.

Worries

St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home aims to resolve all worries informally, quickly and in collaboration with the person raising the worry. Worries will be managed by the relevant manager for the service in which the worry has been raised (for example Childcare Manager for the House, Deputy Childcare Manager, Class teacher or Assistant Head of School).

If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved, the formal complaints procedure should be initiated. The person who raised the worry should always be asked as to whether they are satisfied with the outcome.

How do I complain?

Complaints may be received verbally or in writing. Complaints must be made to the School and Children's Home within three months of the difficulty arising or event occurring. Contact details for addressing a complaint are shown at the end of this policy.

Stage One – Initial Complaint

A complaint at this stage can be made either verbally or in writing. On receipt of a complaint St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home will record and acknowledge the complaint within five working days and confirm who is dealing with it.

Key contacts:

- Education - Head of School
- Residential Care - Registered Manager of the Children's Home
- Medical - Clinical Lead
- Therapy - Therapy Lead
- Miscellaneous general concerns can be raised with any of the above if the usual route would cause undue delay (e.g. because of staff working shifts/ being on annual leave)

- A complaint should not be investigated by someone who is implicated in the complaint. If this is the case, the complaint will be progressed to the next stage.

St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home will notify Ofsted of any serious complaint in addition to any other notification requirements which may be placed on the School or Children's Home by the placing Local Authority.

At any stage of the process St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home may seek to convene a resolution meeting to deal with the matter where appropriate. If the investigation is not completed within three weeks, the complainant will be notified of the progress every four weeks.

If the complaint is not dealt with in a timely manner nor to the satisfaction of the complainant, then the complaint can be progressed to stage two of the procedure.

Stage 2 – Not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response from Stage 1, the complaint will be referred to the Director of Education. Complaints must be received within one month of receiving the stage one response.

Complaints at this stage must be in writing, providing details of why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. Complaints under this stage will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt.

If it is anticipated that the resolution and final response will not be possible within three weeks, a letter indicating expected timescales for a final response and the reason for the delay will be sent to the complainant.

Stage 3 – Appeal to Chief Executive

An appeal against a Stage two decision, may be made in writing to the Chief Executive at St Elizabeth's Centre. The Chief Executive will investigate and respond using the same timescales as outlined in Stage two.

Stage 4 – Appeal to Governors

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of stage three, the complainant can appeal to the Governors. The complaint should be in writing and give a precise nature of the complaint, reason for appeal and the desired resolution. The Chief Executive will arrange for the Governors to conduct a review of the case within a reasonable timescale. The outcome of the review will be shared with the complainant within ten days of the review meeting.

Stage 5 – Complaint to Ofsted

If after all stages of the complaints procedure has been exhausted and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, then Ofsted will look at a formal complaint. This option is available throughout the complaints procedure.

We will notify Ofsted of any serious complaints, along with our responses, in addition to complying with any other notification requirements placed on us by placing Authorities.

Ofsted will often want to know that our own procedures have been exhausted before conducting their own enquiries.

Unreasonable behaviour and demands

In the case of unacceptable behaviour towards staff or a complainant putting unreasonable demands on the School and Children's Home to the disadvantage of others; or persistence in repeatedly raising the same issue, taking up a disproportionate amount of time and resources, the Chief Executive may decide to restrict complainant contact with the School and Children's Home or with staff. Individual complainants will be notified in writing, with reasons, of any such temporary or permanent restrictions.

All complainants will be treated with respect and consideration. Relationships will not be damaged in anyway as a result of the complaint being lodged.

Once a complaint investigation has been concluded, St Elizabeth's School and Children's Home will identify any actions or recommendations generated, to ensure that we learn from complaints raised. This enables the continuation and development of services in order to provide the best possible care, education, therapy and health provision for Children and Young People.

Contact details

Complaints (School)

Samantha Steinke-Sanderson,
Head of School,
St Elizabeth's School,
Perry Green,
Much Hadham,
Hertfordshire,
SG10 6EW
Email: Samantha.Steinke-Sanderson@stelizabeths.org.uk

Complaints (Residential care)

Diane O'Connor,
Registered Manager
St Elizabeth's School,
Perry Green,
Much Hadham,
Hertfordshire,
SG10 6EW
Email: Diane.O'Connor@stelizabeths.org.uk

Complaints to Ofsted

Enquiries,
National Business Unit,
Ofsted,
5th, 6th and 7th Floors,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 1234 234
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk