

Interim complaints procedure: CASPA School Hub (Covid-19 School Closure)

The CASPA (Covid School Closure School Hub) is based at Pennine Way Primary School and this interim complaints procedure covers all children from the linked schools who are linked to the hub.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the linked schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that is being provided. During this period of school closure we will use this interim complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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 of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, a member of staff from one of the linked schools will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, we will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this interim complaints procedure, which follows the guidance from the DfE (April 2020). Many issues can be resolved informally and during the period of closure, schools are not expected to formally escalate complaints until schools have officially reopened.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the staff member working in the hub classroom or the Headteacher of the hub that week. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against staff working in the hub (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, in writing and handed in at the Pennine Way School Office. Please address them to the Headteacher and mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be made in the first instance, in writing and handed in at the Pennine Way School Office. Please address them to the Chair of Governors and mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be made in the first instance, in writing and handed in at the Pennine Way School Office. Please address them as Clerk to the Governing Body and mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. Please observe social distancing during this time.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure, for instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by CASPA School Hub (Covid-19 School Closure) other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Cumbria LA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local

	responsibility for safeguarding Email: lado@cumbria.gov.uk or 03003 033892 the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0333 240 1727
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the schools' internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the schools' internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Even if other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, following the guidance from the DfE (April 2020), schools are not expected to formally escalate complaints until schools have officially reopened.

Resolving complaints

Throughout this period of closure, we want to resolve any complaints. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Interim Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **3** school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within **14** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions, we will take to resolve the complaint. Most issues will be resolved in this way and during the period of closure, schools are not expected to formally escalate complaints until schools have officially reopened (DfE April 2020).

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

During the period of closure, schools are not expected to formally escalate complaints until schools have officially reopened (DfE April 2020).

Once schools have officially reopened, this interim complaints procedure will cease to operate and each individual school will revert to its own complaints procedure.

Interim Complaint Form CASPA Hub School (Covid-19 Closure)

Please complete and return to the School Office, Pennine Way Primary School addressed to either the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:

Date:

Interim Complaints Procedure: Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible.
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- ask for assistance as needed.
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information.
 - analysing information.
- liaising with the complainant as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of any meeting.
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely.
- be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- prepare a report that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The decision will then be made whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details, which will not take place until the schools have officially reopened.