

# Community Connections



**COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS**  
*Nurturing Communities, Embracing Nature*

## Complaints Policy

Commencement Date: 06<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Review Date: 06<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Signed :Mrs N Butler

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## **1.0 Introduction**

It is in everyone's interests that concerns are resolved/clarified at the earliest possible stage. Where concerns are raised Community Connections will work with the individual who raised the concern to identify what would resolve the situation and then endeavour to find a resolution at the earliest opportunity. In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, all local authority maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the provision provides.

Initial concerns should be dealt with by an appropriate member of staff. These should be taken seriously, and every effort made to resolve matters as quickly as possible. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to forward these to the Directors and Shareholders.

Where it is not possible to resolve concerns informally, the formal complaints procedure can be accessed. This document outlines how complaints will be dealt with under the Formal Complaints Policy

Complainants will always be given the opportunity to complete the complaints process in full, regardless of whether it is felt that the complaint is justified or not. If the complaints process is ongoing and further enquiries are received regarding the same subject we will not respond to the new enquires/complaints. This is because it is unhelpful to have more than one investigation ongoing which duplicate the issues being investigated.

## **2.0 Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a Community Connections premises**

Where Community Connections has third party providers offering community facilities or services through their premises, or using their facilities, the providers must have their own complaints procedure in place. Any complaints made concerning third party providers will be dealt with under their own procedures. The Directors will ensure that providers have the correct processes in place to deal with any concerns or complaints and any issues should be raised with the provider directly.

## **3.0 Who can make a complaint?**

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that Community Connections provides, unless statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions, a list is included within the next section).

## **4.0 Exclusions to the complaints procedure:**

The following issues will not be subject to Community Connections complaints procedure as they are outside of our jurisdiction: admission to schools; exclusions from school; special educational needs (SEN Tribunal) statutory proposals for school re-organisation; claims for damages staff grievance or disciplinary matters child protection issues; claims for damages

Complaints made against Community Connections staff will be considered, however where it is determined that matters should be dealt with under our own grievance and disciplinary procedures complainants will not be informed of the outcome. Where a complaint relates to the behaviour of a pupil this may be subject to the our conduct and disciplinary procedures and the detail will remain confidential to Natures Pathway and the parents of the child involved. Complainants can be assured that the complaints will be investigated fully but due to data protection information will not be shared with them in these circumstances. Where complaints concern child protection matters these should be raised with Community Connections but will not usually be considered as a formal complaint where there is likely to be a Child Protection Investigation. Where a complaint is received which should not be dealt with as a formal complaint Community Connections will write to the complainant to advise them of this and the reason for the decision. Community Connections will confirm the correct process to be followed.

## **5.0 Accessibility**

Community Connections will ensure that the formal complaints procedure: is easily accessible and publicised both within our premises and available on the

- website;
- is simple to understand and use;
- is impartial and in the spirit of working together co-operatively to reach the
  - best resolution for everyone;
  - respectful of confidentiality for all;

## **6.0 Time limit for making a complaint:**

In general, any matter which is raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered.

## **7.0 Recording Complaints:**

Complaints should be made on the form provided by Natures Pathway. This is to ensure that there is an accurate record of the complaint and it is clearly understood. However, if complainants are unable to complete this form complaints will be accepted in the following ways:

- in person;
- by telephone;
- or in writing.

When a formal complaint is received Community Connections will write to the complainant within 5 school days to confirm what will happen next and the anticipated timescales.

### **8.0 Keeping people informed:**

Each stage of the complaints process has agreed timescales which should be adhered to. If for any reason this is not possible Community Connections will write to the complainant to explain the reasons and confirm when the action will be completed.

### **9.0 Stages of the complaints process:**

The following outlines the stages of the formal complaints procedure, at the end of each stage of the procedure complainants will be advised of how to progress to the next stage if they remain dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation has been conducted.

Formal stage one: a formal complaint will be investigated by the Directors. The investigation will be completed within 10 school days and at the end of the investigation a full written response will be sent to the complainant.

Formal stage 2: If you are dissatisfied with the outcome then you may ask your child's registered school to launch their own investigation, they will inform you of the outcome (please see their policy for advice on timescales).

**10.0 Next Steps** for complainants who remain dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted: Maintained Schools: When stage 2 has been completed this is the end of the school complaints procedure. If complainants are dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted they may ask for a further review of the process by the local authority. If complainant has completed the local procedures and remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. Further information can be obtained from the DfE School Complaints Unit by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

### **11.0 Social Media**

Individuals who raise concerns are asked to comply with Community Connections guidance on social media which should be available on our website, a complaint can be undermined by:

- Comments made on social media
- Identifying individual staff on social media
- Personal abuse targeted towards individual members of staff

- Physical or verbal threats targeted to individuals or groups of staff These behaviours amount to harassment and will be dealt with by the Police.

## **12.0 Serial and Persistent Complainants**

Community Connections is committed to working with anyone who raises an issue to take this seriously and work towards finding a solution to concerns. Generally, this should be a straightforward process and we value the feedback that we receive on services. We accept that complainants may ask difficult questions where they believe that things have gone wrong and have a right to go through the complaints process. However, in a minority of cases people pursue their feedback in a way which is inappropriate. Where Community Connections is contacted repeatedly by individuals making the same point or asking for reconsideration on our position we will need to take appropriate action. Community Connections has a Serial and Persistent Complaints Policy for these difficult situations. This policy sets out what is considered to be unreasonable behaviour and the action that will be taken to address this. The application of a 'serial' or 'persistent' marking will be made against the subject of the complaint itself rather than the complainant

### **12.0 Model Policy for Serial and Persistent Complainants**

Community Connections is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with us, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Community Connections defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with us, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

The following are a list of issues and behaviours which could be considered to be unreasonable, this list is not exhaustive

A complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on our time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:
- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Schools will deal with formal complaints in accordance with the timescales stated in the school complaints policy and will agree the scope of the complaint at the start of the process. Once the complaint is agreed complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.. The application of a 'serial' or 'persistent' marking will be against the subject or the complaint itself rather than the complainant. If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Community Connections causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put

in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Community Connections

This policy was last reviewed on: 6th January 2024

Signed: N Butler

Renew Date 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025 or as needed