



# The Castle Partnership Trust

ACHIEVE | BELONG | PARTICIPATE

Wellington Road

Taunton TA1 5AU

Tel: 01823 274073

Email: [office@castle.somerset.sch.uk](mailto:office@castle.somerset.sch.uk)

## **SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Date: March 2016**

**Executive Headteacher: Sarah Watson**

**Headteacher, Court Fields School: Rachael Bennett**

## **Introduction**

This document advises how to make a complaint or suggestion about any service provided by The Castle Partnership Trust.

We aim to provide many opportunities to keep you informed and involved in your child's progress. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and good atmosphere in the school. However, sometimes misunderstandings arise but these can usually be sorted out by speaking to the right person. Your concern can then be looked into and a response given.

### **What should I do first?**

Be clear what you want to talk to the school about. Remember that although you may want to change a situation, you want it to end on a positive note with no bad feelings. Because of this you should try to follow the process and not back yourself, or anyone else, into a corner. Talking with the school can help you to understand how we see the situation and give you the chance to say what it looks like to you.

Although some schools, particularly for younger children, can see parents who just "pop in", this is not generally possible. If you have a concern, please make an appointment so you have enough time to talk things through.

### **Raising Concerns - who should I contact?**

That depends on the particular situation. Often the teacher is able to deal with the matter. More serious issues will require a senior member of staff or the Headteacher. Mutual courtesy is expected and ensures things go smoothly. There should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Most problems are solved in this way.

### **What if I am still unhappy? (Stage 1)**

Ask for an appointment with the Headteacher or her nominee.

It may help to give some times when you are free, to assist us to make a mutually convenient appointment. Do try to be patient, as every effort will be made to see you as soon as possible. If your child has special educational needs you may want to contact Somerset Parent Partnership (an independent advisory service) to talk about your concerns (01823 355578).

Before attending the meeting, it would be useful for you to put your concerns down in writing. We can then focus on finding a solution. When attending the appointment you may wish to bring a friend or family member with you.

### **What should I expect to happen as a result of the meeting?**

After the meeting there may be a need for the Headteacher (or her nominee) to undertake further investigations in order to make an informed decision and help achieve resolution. The Headteacher (or her nominee) will write to you outlining the investigation and giving details of any action (if appropriate) to be taken within a mutually agreed timescale.

### **What if I feel the Head or her nominee hasn't answered my question or investigated my query?**

If you are still unhappy you may, if you wish, ask to meet with the Chair of Governors (if the Chair of Governors is unavailable, the Vice-Chair will usually take her place).

### **What will I need to do? (Stage 2)**

Contact the Clerk to the Governors, giving details of your complaint in writing and requesting a meeting with the Chair of Governors (or her representative). You will receive a written response within 20 school days of the date of your meeting.

### **What if I am still unhappy?**

You may, if you wish ask the Board of Governors to hold a review. This is a formal process.

### **What will I need to do? (Stage 3)**

Write to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 school days of receiving the Chair of Governors' response stating that you wish to make a formal complaint. Make it clear what it is you are complaining about and what you would like the Governors to do. If it will help you, we can give you a form that can be used for this purpose. You cannot introduce new or different complaints at this stage.

### **What will happen next?**

A panel, comprising two Governors and one person independent from the management and operation of the Academy Trust, will undertake a review.

The Clerk to the Governors will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient date, time and place for you to meet with the panel and will send you a Governing Body Review Request Form to complete.

You will be invited to meet with the panel within 15 school days to explain your concerns. You may bring a friend if you wish; this could be anyone you think will be able to support you.

After the meeting the panel will review and/or investigate the school's handling of/response to your complaint and decide if it was appropriate and fair. They may wish to meet with any staff or witnesses who can provide information.

The panel will write to you within 15 school days to explain their decision. This decision will usually be final.

### **What do I do if I'm still unhappy?**

If you are still unhappy you may, if you wish, contact the Education Funding Agency (EFA) via the Schools Complaints Form on the Department for Education's website:

[https://form.education.gov.uk/fillform.php?self=1&form\\_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form\\_name=Contact+the+Department+for+Education&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1](https://form.education.gov.uk/fillform.php?self=1&form_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form_name=Contact+the+Department+for+Education&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1)

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which the EFA handles your complaint, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education.

Remember the whole process exists so that everyone's views can be heard. The aim is that the complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with. Communications with school are welcome and the latter stages of this complaints procedure are rarely used but remain a part of the process.

### **Complaints about the Headteacher or the Governors**

Where a complaint regards the Headteacher, you should first approach the Headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If you are not satisfied with this outcome, you should notify the Clerk to the Governors in writing. The Clerk will contact the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair if the Chair is unavailable), who will be responsible for investigating your complaint.

Where a complaint regards a Governor, the same process applies for the Headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, you should contact the Clerk to the Governors. Informal resolution will be sought but, where this fails, the Board of Governors will hold a formal review. The Vice-Chair or an independent person will mediate the proceedings.

### Timeline

<b>Raising Concerns</b>	The relevant member of staff will address your concerns/issues.	The staff member will respond to you within 5 school days.
<b>Stage 1</b>	Investigation by the Headteacher (or her nominee).	The Headteacher (or her nominee) will respond to you within 5 school days of having received your complaint. You will receive confirmation of the outcome of their investigation within the timescale you agreed at the meeting.
<b>Stage 2</b>	Investigation by the Chair of Governors (or her representative).	The Chair of Governors (or her representative) will endeavour to meet with you within 10 school days of the date of receipt of your complaint. You will receive a written response from the Chair of Governors (or her representative) within 20 school days of the date of your meeting.
<b>Stage 3</b>	Formal review of the complaint by the Board of Governors.	You should write to the Clerk to Governors within 10 school days of receiving the Chair of Governors' response, stating that you wish to make a formal complaint. You will be invited to meet with the panel within 15 schools days of receiving your complaint. The panel will write to you within 15 school days of the meeting to explain their decision.

We will endeavour to abide by the timeframes stated under each stage but, in some circumstances, this may not always be possible. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within the given timeframe, you will be contacted as soon as possible to agree a timeframe that works for all parties involved.

We reserve the right not to investigate complaints that have been made six months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an exceptionally serious nature, or where there is reasonable justification for why you have been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Headteacher will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the Chair of Governors of her decision.

### Suggestions

If you have a suggestion, please write to the Headteacher at the school, giving details of your name, address, telephone number and the details of your suggestion.

### Contact Details

**For Governors:**

**Miss J Gregory  
Clerk to the Governors  
The Castle Partnership Trust  
Wellington Road  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 5AU**

**Tel: 01823 274073**

**Email: [office@castle.somerset.sch.uk](mailto:office@castle.somerset.sch.uk)**

**For the Headteachers:**

**Ms R Bennett (Headteacher)  
Court Fields School  
Mantle Street  
Wellington  
Somerset  
TA21 8SW**

**Mrs L Chard (Headteacher's PA)**

**Tel: 01823 664201**

**Email: [SCH.552@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:SCH.552@educ.somerset.gov.uk)**

**Mrs S Watson (Headteacher)  
The Castle School  
Wellington Road  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 5AU**

**Miss J Gregory (Headteacher's PA)**

**Tel: 01823 274073**

**Email: [office@castle.somerset.sch.uk](mailto:office@castle.somerset.sch.uk)**

---