



# Complaints and Compliments Policy

2023/24

Edison Pace School aims to provide a high-quality service in partnership with our learners, stakeholders, both internal and external, and parents/carers, to actively seek their opinion regarding the quality of provision received. To this end Edison Pace School will endeavour to:

- Record complaints and ensure that they are brought swiftly to the attention of the staff, and senior management.
- Resolve any complaints as fully and quickly as possible.
- Use the information gained to improve the quality of services throughout the school for the benefit of all.

## **Compliments**

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction by a learner or relative or other representative. It may also be an expression of gratitude or appreciation to staff for the service provided.

In order to recognise the level of appreciation, a record of all forms of compliments will be retained within the school.

## **Complaints**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction from the learner, their parent/carer or other representative, or any other person with a vested interest in the school.

The complaints procedure is designed to:

- be accessible
- be simple to understand and to use
- allow quick handling of the complaint within specified time limits
- ensure all parties involved are kept informed
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- address all points and provide an effective response
- provide information to managers and staff so that services can be improved

Edison Pace School acknowledges that, regardless of how well staff undertake their role, there may be occasions where processes or actions are not agreed with, this may occur when there are misunderstanding between the worker and the learner/their family or whether the learner/their family may be dissatisfied for any other reason or simply if there has been a personality clash.

It is the express desire of Edison Pace School and Edison Young People, to resolve any difficulties with the learner, their family or any party with a legitimate interest in the welfare of the learner.

It is for this reason that the first part of the Complaints Policy is and Informal resolution.

## **Informal resolution**

To resolve any complaint informally, Edison Pace School expects the staff member (on whom the complaint is focused) to meet with the complainant with the intention of problem solving and moving the relationship/resolution forward. Staff will be especially aware of any power dynamics in this situation and act with sensitivity and discretion at all times. A third party may also be present to help mediate between the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is made. The complaint will be recorded on the school internal system.

The complainant will be given the opportunity to express their complaint fully and the staff member given the opportunity to respond fully. From this position it is hoped it may be possible to identify where things have gone wrong and make agreements to prevent a comparable situation reoccurring.

At the informal stage of the complaint, it may be appropriate for the complainant to have a chaperone present as support. It is not necessary or appropriate for legal representative to act as an accompanying adult at this stage.

At any time during the complaints process the complainant can choose for their complaint to be heard by an individual who is separate from the school. In these situations, the complaint can be heard by an Edison Young People central management team.

Should it not prove possible to resolve the complaint informally, the *Formal Process* will be instituted. Should this be necessary, the Head of Edison Pace School will be required to conduct a formal investigation into the complaint. The complainant will be requested to submit a written complaint.

## **Formal Process**

### *First Stage*

The complainant will be formally interviewed by the investigating lead and notes of the meeting will be taken. These notes will be signed and dated by the complainant as a fair and accurate representation of what they have said. The investigating lead will then undertake further formal interviews, as required, following the same process with any other person relevant to the investigation. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the CEO/Proprietor will manage the investigation and complaints process.

All interviewees will be given the opportunity to have another person present at these interviews as a chaperone. For the learner/their family it might be another family member, an Independent Advocate, Social Worker etc. For the staff member it might be a work-place colleague of similar work status.

If, at any point during the investigation, it appears that a criminal offence may have been committed, the matter should be reported to the police immediately. Discussions should be held with police about whether the investigation into the complaint can continue alongside their own inquiries. The police will then inform the school on the next stage.

In the case of a safeguarding concern the LADO may be contacted by the Headteacher to aid investigation and support the Headteacher with the complaint and ultimate outcome of the investigation. If it emerges at any point that a learner may have caused

significant harm or may be at risk of significant harm, safeguarding processes and procedures will be instigated immediately.

The school will feed back within ten working days the results of their investigation to the complainant. This decision will be confirmed in writing.

### *Second Stage and Right to Appeal*

Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they may have a right of appeal. A decision to appeal must be put in writing to the school Proprietor (Tommy MacDonald-Milner) and must give reasons as to why the complainant feels a review of the decision is necessary.

The school Proprietor will then review the investigation process and collated evidence, conduct any further investigations he feels appropriate and report back to all parties concerned within ten working days. The appeal decision will be confirmed in writing.

### *Third Stage*

Should the complainant still feel dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the manner in which the complaint has been managed, they can request a panel hearing. This panel will consist of a minimum of three people, one of whom will be independent to the school. The complainant may be accompanied to a panel hearing by a chaperone. A record will be taken of all outcomes and actions from the hearing and these findings will be reported in writing to the complainant and a copy kept on record. All records are confidential in line with the data protection policy.

Should the staff member be dissatisfied with the process at any stage, it is their right to take out a grievance. This grievance will be investigated in line with Edison Grievance Procedure: at the conclusion of the original complaint.

### **Exceptions to process**

Should the complaint be made against the Headteacher, the school Proprietor will conduct the first stage investigation and in the event of an appeal against the decision, an independent consultant will be appointed to consider the appeal so that the integrity of the final appeal to the school Proprietor is retained.

After completion of the formal complaints process, should a complainant wish to request an independent panel review the complaint, this will be considered by the Chief Executive of Edison Young People, who will make the final decision on this.

### **Timescales**

In order that complaints are treated with the appropriate level of attention, Edison Pace School requires complaints to be managed within prescribed timescales by the senior leadership team of the school and school Proprietor:

- The informal meeting must take place within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.
- A formal meeting will take place within ten working days of receiving notification from the complainant of the informal process being unsuccessful. (This may be at the end of the test period to resolve the complaint informally). Feedback from the formal meeting will be provided within ten working days.
- Should an appeal be considered by the complainant, this will be convened within ten working days of receiving the notification. Feedback from the appeal will be provided within ten working days.
- An appeal will be considered out of time if the complainant has not made representation within ten working days of the date of the formal complaint being responded to.
- Similarly, a final appeal to the school Proprietor of Edison Pace School will be considered out of time should it not be received within ten working days of the date of the outcome of the formal complaint being responded to.

### **Persistent Complaints**

Should a complainant remain dissatisfied with the formal process and does not feel they have had resolution to their satisfaction it may be that in extenuating circumstances they may try to re-open this case or complain on a further basis. Should this situation arise the Chief Executive reserves the right to write to the complainant and explain that the matter has been closed. Should a complainant continue to re-raise this issue or become persistent in their complaint to the point they may be deemed a 'serial' complainant, the school reserves the right to refuse to respond to his complaint. This may be because:

- The school has already taken all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint through all processes set out in this policy.
- The complainant has been given clear information and a statement around the school's final position.
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly and making the same points each time.
- It is reasoned by the school that the complainant is trying to disrupt the daily running of the school or learners experience.
- The complainant is abusive, aggressive, or provoking towards staff.
- The complainant makes personal or insulting remarks to a member of the staff.

Should the school wish to decline to investigate an unreasonable complaint, they may rely on the guidance from the DfE for managing this and the response to the complainant.

Should a person's behaviour give rise to concerns around their potential to harm others, physically or otherwise, on school premises, it is reasonable for the Headteacher to inform the person by writing that they are barred from communicating with the school and the school premises.

The number of formal complaints made will also be available on the school's website.