

Policy

Complaints procedure

Summer 2017

**New
Schools
Network**

Complaints Policy of New Schools Network

New Schools Networks views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at New Schools Network knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of New Schools Network. Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in New Schools Network. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use New Schools Network's Discipline and Grievance policies.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Complaints policy of New Schools Network

Written complaints may be sent to the Company Secretary, New Schools Network at 8h Floor, Westminster Tower, 3 Albert Embankment SE1 7SL or by e-mail at sigrun@newschoolsnetwork.org. Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 020 7537 9208 or in person to any of New Schools Network's senior staff, or trustees at 8h Floor, Westminster Tower, 3 Albert Embankment SE1 7SL or at any of our events or activities.

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Company Secretary within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the Company Secretary records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

NSN will aim to provide the complainant with a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chair may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond; the person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One will be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.