Inspiring Futures Partnership Trust

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT

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CHEPPING VIEW PRIMARY ACADEMY SCITT

COMPLAINTS AND RESOLUTION POLICY

Updated by	Hayley Rouse
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Responding to Complaints about the SCITT &/or it's Partnership

Aim of this Policy

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT is committed to ensuring all concerns expressed by a trainee, mentor or any individual or organisation be resolved as quickly as possible without the need for escalation. However, where resolution is not achieved quickly, this policy sets out the formal procedure should a person raising the complaint remain dissatisfied.

Concerns & Complaints

Clarity around the difference between a concern and a complaint is vital. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures.

Whilst Trainees are working within the Partnership, we expect their experience to be outstanding. The documentation provided, professional discussions with placement staff (School-based Mentors, Senior Point of Contact and Headteacher), communication with Quality Assurance Consultants and Lead Mentors and use of our formative assessment procedures to support Trainees' professional development means that, at all times, Trainees will be aware of the levels at which they are performing and their areas for development. Open discussion and continual development would suggest that no assessment decision should be a surprise to a Trainee. Trainees who would like to discuss an aspect of the course, including appealing against the decision regarding an observation, an assignment or End of Placement Summative Report, will need to discuss the issue with their School-based Mentor or Senior Point of Contact initially. The Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT Leadership are the next point of contact. Most issues can be addressed informally in this way.

If a Partnership school or CVPA SCITT are concerned about the progress of a Trainee, then a Cause for Concern process, including a supported action plan, will be initiated. This process is clearly documented and is available for all Trainees and members of the Partnership School (School-based Mentors, Senior Point of Contact and Headteacher) involved to download through the CVPA SCITT website and the Master Documents folder in Teams. School-based Mentors, Senior Point of Contacts and Quality Assurance

Consultants are informed of the process, which needs to be followed during termly training. The Cause for Concern process is a formal process, signed by all those involved.

Trainees should be aware that all matters of academic standards remain the responsibility of Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT. Issues relating to the PGCE element of the course will be dealt with by the SCITT Director of ITT and the HEI Partner and may be referred to the SCITT Executive Steering Group. In addition, Trainees could ask their own teaching unions for advice. Trainees on an employment-based route would need to work through their main placement school's complaints procedure, normally involving the headteacher or school governors. If a trainee on an employment route (salaried) is on their Induction Placement, they should follow this policy in line with expectations of trainees on a non-salaried route. Issues regarding the PGCE element of the course will also follow the complaints procedure of the HEI.

The following process is designed as a general procedure to cover all occasions and should therefore be interpreted in relation to the prevailing situation. It starts off as an "informal" preventative procedure but then becomes more formalised.

Overview of Complaints/Disputes Procedure

Stage 1

Disputes between a Trainee and School-based Mentor or Senior Point of Contact should be resolved by discussion and negotiation between the relevant parties. Many concerns can be resolved quickly. If this is not possible the placement school headteacher should rule on the dispute.

In the event that the dispute is not resolved satisfactorily or involvement of the placement school headteacher is not appropriate, the SCITT Director of ITT should become involved. If the decision of the SCITT Director of ITT does not prove a satisfactory resolution to all parties, the complaint/dispute can move to the next stage and a Trainee can appeal against the decision.

Throughout this process the Accounting Officer will be kept informed.

At each stage of the above, the person who receives the complaint will attempt to work with the Trainee to resolve the complaint informally. This may involve:

- mediation and conciliation
- explaining policies or decisions
- helping the Trainee to express their views to another person
- review of SCITT/school direct provision
- review of support mechanisms

Depending on the nature of the complaint it may not be possible for an immediate solution; facts or information relating to the incident may need to be clarified. If this is the case the person who receives the complaint should make a record of the name, contact details and record of complaint.

Stage 2

If the Trainee is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, they may wish to appeal. This should be done in writing to the Accounting Officer via the SCITT administrative office within fourteen days of the ruling from the SCITT Director of ITT.

The Accounting Officer will contact the SCITT-linked Trustee of the Inspiring Futures Partnership Trust regarding the appeal. The Accounting Officer will convene an Appeals Panel, consisting of three members of either the IFPT Trustees or CVPA SCITT Partnership Strategic group who have not previously been involved in the dispute/complaint.

The Appeals Panel can utilise whatever expertise they deem appropriate.

The Appeals Panel will meet at a mutually agreed date and time and consider written and/or personally presented evidence and representations from the trainee and SCITT Leadership Team within thirty days of the receipt of the letter of appeal to make a ruling and their ruling will be final. Please see appendix 2 for information about an appeals panel.

Stage 3- Independent External Review

Once the review stage has been completed, the complainant is entitled to ask the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the independent ombudsman service, to review the complaint about the outcome of the provider's complaints process. The time limit for bringing a complaint to the OIA is 12 months from the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter. Further information about how to complain to the OIA can be found at https://www.oiahe.org.uk/

Academic Appeal

An academic appeal is defined by the Good Practice Framework as "a challenge to or request for reconsideration of a decision by an academic body that makes decisions on student progress, assessment and awards. This may include a request to change marks or progress decisions, or final award classifications."

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT does not allow Trainees (including Assessment Only candidates) to question the exercise of academic judgement, that is, a decision made by academic staff (partnership school staff, Quality Assurance Consultants and SCITT Leadership) on the quality of the work itself or the criteria begin applied to mark the work.
If Trainees are dissatisfied with the conduct of an assessment (including the award of QTS) they may appeal to the Executive Steering Group.

Procedure for dealing with appeal against the conduct of an assessment

An appeal must be made in writing within two weeks of the assessment to the Partnership Manager. Two members of the Executive Board will consider the grounds for appeal and reply within seven working days. The appeal will be considered only if the investigation of the complaint found that there had been:

- a procedural irregularity in the assessment process
- bias or reasonable perception of bias
- circumstances affecting the Trainee's performance where, for good reason, the academic body was not made aware of a significant factor relating to the assessment of a Trainee when it made its original decision
- a challenge to the outcome of a Trainee's request for additional consideration of personal circumstances which have affected their performance.

Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT 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 the SCITT. However, 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.

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the SCITT, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

● 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 cooperate 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 considered 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 CVPA SCITT'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 SCITT Partnership 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 social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with CVPA SCITT 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.

Publishing Policy:

This Policy will be made available to trainees and Partnership Schools on the CVPA SCITT Teams platform.

Confidentiality Notice: This document and the information in it are provided in confidence, for the sole purpose of Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT and may not be disclosed to any third party or used for any other purpose without the express written permission of Inspiring Futures Partnership Trust.

Appendix 1: Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the SCITT office in an envelope marked for the attention of the Director of ITT or Accounting Officer. The Director of ITT or Accounting Officer will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Address:

Postcode:
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Your relationship to CVPA SCITT, e.g. applicant, Trainee Teacher, School-based Mentor, Senior Point of Contact, colleague at placement school, neighbour, member of public:

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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 Complaint Received:

Date of acknowledgement sent:

By Whom:

Complaint referred to:

Outcome:

Annex 2: Establishing a panel

The Accounting Officer will make arrangements for the complaints panel to be appointed. The panel will consist of three members, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the SCITT. This person may be an IFPT Trustee or a Trustee from another academy within the Inspiring Futures Partnership Trust. When the Accounting Officer receives a copy of the complaint form they will inform the IFPT Chair of Trustees maybe Trustee linked to SCITT see question raised earlier that a complaint has been received and that it has been passed to the panel to deal with. No further information about the complaint should be shared with other trustees.

There are several points which any trustees sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the complaint panel is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No Trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, trustees need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of trustee or Trust Executive Leadership.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- The trustees sitting on the panel need to be aware of this complaints procedure.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- A record keeper must be appointed for the meeting along with a Chair of panel.

The hearing is as welcoming as possible.

- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- A designated person from the panel may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Director of ITT or a designated person is then invited to explain the SCITT's actions and be followed by the SCITT's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Director of ITT or designated person and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Director of ITT or designated person is then invited to sum up the SCITT's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five working days.