

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Scope

This procedure covers CST and its subsidiary organisations. For brevity, the term the Group is used throughout and should be taken to mean CST and its subsidiary organisations. The Group includes:

- Confederation of School Trusts (CST) (Company number 05303883)
- CST Professional Development Limited (Company number 10354936)

A complaint is any spoken or written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, with our services which calls for a response. Our procedure covers complaints about the standard of service we provide, the conduct of our staff and any action or lack of action by staff.

This complaints procedure does not cover matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure or complaints where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation, e.g. Data Protection Act or by another regulatory body such as OFSTED. This procedure also does not apply to Group staff members or consultants who should refer to internal policies including the anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy, and the grievance resolution policy.

This procedure does not apply to a complaint regarding a Trustee or Director of the Group. Any complaint of this nature will be investigated through the Trustee/Director conduct investigation policy.

Our standards for handling complaints

The Group is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we interact with. We encourage you to tell us if we get things wrong. We promise to listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service. We will resolve complaints fairly, professionally and as effectively as possible. All complaints will be handled in a consistent manner. Confidentiality and discretion will be maintained, as far as possible, to safeguard all parties.

How to complain

If you wish to complain about our conduct or standard of service, you must do this within three months of the issue arising. If you delay longer, this could affect our ability to consider your complaint. In some cases, a long delay will mean that we will not be able to consider the matter at all.



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Informal resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If you feel able, please speak to the member of staff (or team) with whom you have had contact who will try to resolve the matter informally. We hope that most complaints will be resolved in this way.

Formal complaints procedure

If you are not satisfied with our response to an informal complaint, you may pursue a formal complaint. We follow a two stage formal complaints procedure as detailed below.

Informing us of a formal complaint

Please put your complaint in writing, marking it as a confidential complaint, and send it to the Chief Operating Officer (COO):

- j.lerbech@cstuk.org.uk; or
- Confederation of School Trusts, c/o Stone King LLP, Boundary House, 91 Charterhouse Street, London, EC1M 6HR

If your complaint relates to the COO, please address it to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and post it to the above address. Any formal complaint received by another Group employee will be passed to the COO, or to the CEO if it relates to the COO.

It will help us to efficiently resolve your complaint if you can give us as much detail as possible, including copies of any documents and correspondence, and stating that you are making a formal complaint in line with our procedure. You should also outline how you would like us to put your complaint right and, if possible, the impact this has had on you.

To make sure we comply with the Equality Act 2010, we will consider adjustments for people with protected characteristics such as hearing or sight impairments, language difficulties or other specific needs. To request an adjustment please contact the COO or CEO per above or on 0115 917 014.

Stage 1

The COO will determine who should handle the complaint and may, where appropriate, pass the complaint to another member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where the complaint relates to the COO the CEO will handle the complaint.



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All Stage 1 formal complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days. A full written response will be provided within 20 working days. If your complaint is particularly complex, and we anticipate not being able to respond within 20 working days, we will contact you to explain why this is and the new deadline.

Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with the response to a Stage 1 complaint, you may request a review, which will be undertaken by someone who was not involved in the Stage 1 complaint. Details of how to request this will be provided in the Stage 1 written response. Any escalation to a Stage 2 complaint must be received by the Group within 20 working days of the response to the Stage 1 complaint.

The Stage 2 review will be undertaken by the CEO if they have not been involved with the Stage 1 complaint, or alternatively by a Trustee as appointed by the Chair of the relevant board.

All Stage 2 formal complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days. A full written response will be provided within 20 working days. If your complaint is particularly complex, and we anticipate not being able to respond within 20 working days, we will contact you to explain why this is and the new deadline.

Third Parties

The Group routinely contracts with other parties, such as conference venues, in delivery of its services. The Group may not be able to investigate or respond to complaints that relate to third parties. Where appropriate we will seek your consent to escalate a complaint to such third parties or alternatively provide you with their details.

If you remain dissatisfied

We trust we will be able to resolve your complaint quickly and efficiently and that you will be satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled. However, if you remain dissatisfied, you have the right in relation to complaints about CST as a charity to contact the Charity Commission as the regulator. CST Professional Development is not regulated by the Charity Commission and therefore Stage 2 is final.

Persistent and/or vexatious complaints

Unreasonably persistent behaviour is behaviour which is 'done repeatedly or as a habit'. The term vexatious is recognised in law and means 'denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is



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brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant.' We reserve the right to refuse to investigate persistent and/or vexatious complaints.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

All complaints are recorded confidentially in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Group will keep a confidential written record of all complaints detailing:

- The stage at which the complaint was resolved (informal, formal stage 1 or formal stage 2).
- Any action taken because of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The complaints log is shared with the relevant Board of Trustees on at least an annual basis.

The Group processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. When dealing with complaints, the Group may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised.
- Name of complainant.
- Description of the issue.
- Record of all the investigations (if appropriate).
- Witness statements (if appropriate).
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage.
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations).
- Notes or minutes of meetings.
- The final written decision.

The information recorded may include *special category personal data* (as further detailed in the Group's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the Group's Data Protection Policy.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where required by Law.



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Review

This procedure will be reviewed every two years or more frequently in response to working experience or changes to Charity or Company Law. A copy of this policy will be made available on the CST website and the MyCST member portal.