

Cantate Youth Choir

Complaints Policy

This policy includes model procedures for handling formal complaints. By adopting the updated procedures set out here, we can ensure complaints are handled effectively.

How should Cantate Youth Choir (“the Choir”) handle complaints made by:

- A member of staff about another member of staff?
- Members of the public (not parents)?
- A parent whose student no longer attends the choir?
- A parent whose student attends the choir?

These complaint procedures do not cover Safeguarding procedures.

Complaint made by one member of staff against another (including the Chairman)

If it cannot be resolved through day-to-day staff management activities, the normal course of action would be to invoke the Staff Grievance Procedure.

Complaint made by a member of the public (not a parent)

Complaints made by members of the public are most likely to be dealt with by the Chairman of the Trustees and the Committee.

Complaint made by a parent whose student no longer attends the choir

The purpose of this complaints policy is to ensure that if an error has been made, or an injustice done, some action can be taken to remedy matters for the injured party. Where parents have removed their student from the choir, it is clearly impossible for the Committee to put things right for that student and, strictly speaking, such complaints fall outside the scope of this policy. However, the Trustees have a duty of care to the students who remain, and it would be advisable for the Committee to investigate circumstances to satisfy themselves that no one had acted inappropriately and that procedures and policies had been followed correctly. There would be no requirement to notify the complainant of the findings of the panel, especially if the Committee felt that doing so would be of no benefit to the Choir. However, it would be good practice to inform parents whether the complaint had been upheld or otherwise.

Complaint made by a parent whose student attends the choir

What is the position of staff who are complained about?

Under this complaint policy any member of staff who is complained about will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint during its investigation. They should also be able to see any response sent to the complainant as a result of the investigation.

How long should Cantate Youth Choir take in dealing with concerns and complaints?

Cantate Youth Choir should aim to deal with these quickly and efficiently at stage one, so avoiding the formal stage two procedure wherever possible. All complaints should be acknowledged within five working days.

The Committee should deal with and respond fully to stage two formal complaints within 28 working days of the written complaint being received. If this is not possible, parents need to be given the reasons for the delay and need to be informed of progress.

What is the FIRST stage in dealing with a complaint?

Most concerns, or potential complaints, can be resolved by offering parents a full discussion with the member of staff who is best able to help. This may involve the Committee working together to investigate the complaint. This is where the process should start, and anyone approached by parents informally will need to steer parents in this direction initially.

Committee members need to be aware that if they do become involved closely with complaints at stage one they cannot be involved with stage two of the complaints procedure.

What is the SECOND stage in dealing with a complaint?

The Chairman of the Trustees will arrange for the complaint to be investigated and considered under the arrangements approved by the Committee for this purpose. This will usually involve a panel of Committee members appointed to act on behalf of the Committee.

It may be helpful to offer the parent the opportunity to talk about the complaint in the course of the investigation, prior to any complaint hearing. This might clarify the outstanding matters of complaint that remain unresolved, and what outcome is sought by the complainant.

Parents should be provided with full details of how the Committee's complaint panel will conduct any further investigation. In some cases it may not be necessary for there to be a formal complaints panel hearing with both parties present together. Generally, however, a formal hearing is the best way for both parents and the Committee to be satisfied they have had a proper opportunity to be listened to. Everyone should also be informed in advance of the order of proceedings for the complaint hearings.

Both parties should make available to the panel, in advance, any written information they intend to use in the formal hearing.

Who can attend a stage two hearing?

At any meetings, parents may be accompanied by a friend or representative who may speak on their behalf. This person could be an interpreter of their choice, and parents should be encouraged to do this where necessary.

The chairman of the panel may invite to the meeting any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. Parents need to be told who this person is before the meeting.

Any member of staff required by Committee members to attend any meeting or hearing will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented.

A member of staff named by parents in the complaint may also choose to attend a meeting even if not required to do so by the Committee, and may be represented. If this happens, parents should be told before the meeting.

What happens after the investigation/hearing?

When the complaint has been fully investigated and considered, parents should be notified of the findings in writing by the chairman of the panel hearing the complaint or the Committee member responsible for the investigation.

The report, with findings, should, at the same time, be published to the Committee and will, in addition, include any recommendations. A meeting of the Committee must accept the findings but can accept, reject or reject in part, the **recommendations**.

The Chairman of the Trustees should write to the parents to confirm any actions agreed by the Committee. Any agreed actions must be implemented by whomever it applies to. Parents should also be informed whether and how they can take their complaint further.

A copy of the report must be sent to the Chairman of the Trustees.

Version 1.1

Reviewed by Committee – July 2017

Next review – July 2018