



Complaints Policy

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Summary of Key Points of Policy

Sutton Music Trust (SMT) is committed to providing a high-quality service to all our stakeholders. To understand how well we do this; we need to know when we get things wrong and how we can improve. This policy aims to ensure a clear process for raising and handling complaints and is open to everyone who engages with Sutton Music Trust. This includes parents/carers, pupils, school staff, strategic and delivery partners, volunteers, visitors and members of our wider local community.

Principles

- SMT welcomes feedback, which is regularly used with staff as a tool to recognise good practice and to improve processes and services. We also welcome and share with staff all other comments and suggestions that may improve aspects of our service and how we can continue to provide high-quality music education.
- We will handle all complaints in line with our organisational values and in accordance with this and other related policies/procedures.
- All complaints will be taken seriously and responded to fairly, consistently and within clear time frames. We will always seek to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of all parties; however, we recognise that this may not always be possible.
- When handling complaints, we will pay due regard to confidentiality and treat all parties with respect and goodwill.
- We treat any formally notified dissatisfaction with our service, which calls for a response as a complaint. This can be:
 - the standard of service we provide
 - the behaviour of our staff
 - any action or lack of action by staff negatively affecting someone
 - failure to follow procedures or policies
 - failure to consider relevant matters in a decision
- We are unable to consider complaints on matters raised that are over 12 months old.
- Individuals are asked to try and initially resolve concerns informally with SMT before lodging a formal complaint. Normally, formal complaints should be raised within one month of the event or within one month of the complainant becoming aware of the cause to complain.

How to raise a complaint (Stage 1)

We expect to resolve any day-to-day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance, we encourage you to raise any complaint or feedback directly with the member of staff concerned. The more formal procedure outlined below is intended for use where informal communication has not resolved the problem.

1. Contact us

Submit your complaint in writing to: hello@suttonmusictrust.org.uk. If you are unable to contact us by email, please write to us at: Sutton Music Trust, Cantium House, Railway Approach, Wallington, SM6 0DZ. Alternatively, call 0208 323 0419.

2. Tell us what happened

To help us fully understand the complaint and how we can help resolve it, we ask that you provide a clear description of the nature of your complaint, including: your details; your child's details (where relevant); what you are complaining about; how you have tried to resolve matters with us informally; how you would like the issue to be resolved; any relevant evidence; any particular communication needs or reasonable adjustments you may have.

3. Acknowledging your complaint

Your complaint will be logged and brought to the attention of a member of the SMT Senior Leadership Team, who will acknowledge receipt within three working days and respond with a proposed resolution and/or next steps within five working days.

If you are unhappy with the outcome (Stage 2)

If you are unhappy with the response or initial outcome, you have the option to escalate your complaint to Stage 2.

1. Let us know

If you wish to escalate your complaint to Stage 2, let us know by reply after we have responded to your initial complaint in Stage 1. We encourage you to provide as much information as possible as to why you are unhappy with the proposed resolution so we can seek to address this.

2. Review and investigations by the Head of Music Service

Your complaint will be escalated to the Head of Music Service, who will acknowledge receipt within three working days. The Head of Service will review your initial complaint, any action taken by SMT staff and any other relevant contextual information. They will consider whether the complainant's questions were answered, whether any injustice or hardship was suffered, and what remedy would be fair and proportionate in the circumstances.

3. Resolution

The Head of Service will decide upon any new course of action or proposed resolution and discuss this with you. It might be the case that the original resolution is deemed to be fair and appropriate, in which case this will be communicated to you with a clear justification. The Head of Service will respond to you within a reasonable time frame, typically no more than 10 working days after the Stage 2 process has begun. If the investigation will take longer than 10 working days, an update will be communicated with you.

Further escalation: Trustee Investigation (Stage 3)

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, you could escalate your complaint to Stage 3.

1. At Stage 3, your complaint will be investigated by representatives from the SMT Board of Trustees. They will review your complaint and all associated context and correspondence. Typically, this will be led by the Chair of Trustees, or if not, they will be kept informed throughout the process.
2. Trustees will consider the complaint in full without bias and in accordance with this policy and make a final decision whether the complaint will be upheld or not and respond to you within a reasonable timeframe. This will typically be within 20 working days after the Stage 3 process has begun. If the complaint is upheld, appropriate action will be taken. If the complaint is not upheld, reasons for this will be clearly given.

Finding a Resolution

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome of the complaint procedure, it may be appropriate for us to offer one or more of the following:

- Accept responsibility and apologise
- An explanation of what went wrong and why
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant
- Putting things right (for example, a change of procedures to prevent future difficulties of a similar nature), with an assurance and explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review and improve practices and procedures, for example, through training or supervision of staff (please note SMT will not inform you of any specific actions concerning individuals)
- Financial compensation. SMT will make whole the financial losses incurred (with evidence provided) as a direct consequence of our actions

Confidentiality

All conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion. Complainants have the right to know what use will be made of personal information and, accordingly, personal information will only be shared between staff on a 'need to know' basis.

We understand that in certain instances, people may wish to remain anonymous. In such cases, we will review the nature of the complaint and decide upon follow-up action if we feel it is necessary. Assistance (where possible) will be offered to all parties in a complaint procedure.

SMT's right to refuse a complaint

SMT have the right to refuse a complaint where the complaint is clearly vexatious, malicious, motivated by racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes and/or if the complaint threatens or abuses SMT staff, tutors or volunteers.

SMT also reserves the right to reject repeated complaints or those that are deliberately made to hinder or obstruct the service. This can include:

- Unjustified complaints
- Insisting complaints are handled outside of this policy
- Raising many detailed but unrelated questions, and insisting on responses to all
- Refusing to accept the outcome, without providing evidence to support this

Monitoring of Complaints We will monitor all complaints to notice any trends and ensure the highest quality of service for all stakeholders. Data relating to complaints will be held in accordance with SMT's Data Protection policy and relevant legislation such as the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Extenuating Circumstances

Issues related to child protection or safeguarding, criminal investigations and/or employee grievances must be handled under the relevant SMT policy / procedure. Should this be the case, the complainant will be informed.