

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Reviewed: FR June 2023
Approved by Governors: June 2023
Next review by: September 2024



This complaints procedure is available to parents of pupils on the school's website and a copy can also be supplied on request.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The school enjoys close relationships with parents and, should a concern or complaint arise, it is expected that parents will contact the school as a matter of urgency so that the issue can be discussed.
- 1.2. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. Please note that courtesy, restraint and good manners are expected from everyone in all communications and interactions. Guidance is given in the document 'Parental Co-operation and Communication with the School'.
- 1.3. Separate procedures apply if a child protection issue has arisen (see the Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy) or if a pupil has been expelled or asked to leave (see the Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy). Both policies are available on the school website.
- 1.4. All time scales in this document refer to term time and 'working days' means school days during term time.

2. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- 2.1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 2.2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's form tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult a more senior member of staff.
- 2.3. Complaints made directly to a more senior member of staff will be referred to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with the complaint, unless the individual receiving the complaint deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- 2.4. If a complaint is made in writing it will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter normally within 3 working days of receipt.
- 2.5. The member of staff dealing with the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days, or in the event that the member of staff dealing with the complaint and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

3. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- 3.1. If parents are not satisfied with the response to a complaint made in accordance with Stage 1 of these procedures, then they should put their complaint in writing to the Head stating explicitly their wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure. The written complaint should set out all the grounds of the complaint and the desired outcome and should also include full contact details. The Head will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days and will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 3.2. In term time, the Head will respond to the parents concerned, normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- 3.3. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- 3.4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 3.5. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- 3.6. Parents will be informed of the decision normally within 20 working days of the formal complaint being made. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

4. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 4.1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), the request must be made in writing to the Head within 14 days from the date of the Head's Stage 2 decision letter (in exceptional circumstances this timescale may be extended). The request must state the outcome they desire and all the grounds of the complaint and enclose copies of any relevant documents. The request will usually only be considered if the procedures at stages 1 and 2 have been completed.
- 4.2. The matter will then be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Panel will consist of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. These are likely to include at least two Governors and will include an additional person who is not a Governor and is independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Clerk.
- 4.3. The Clerk will refer the matter to the Complaints Panel for consideration and, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days.
- 4.4. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- 4.5. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 4.6. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 4.7. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete and communicate, as set out below, normally within 20 working days of the Hearing.
- 4.8. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendation, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint was made. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

5. Confidentiality and Records

- 5.1. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required of the school by paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, namely where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 5.2. Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure.
- 5.3. If a complaint is made by or on behalf of a group of parents, or if a similar complaint is made by several parents at the same time, the School will address the complaint or complaints on an individual basis to ensure that the matter is dealt with most appropriately for each pupil or parent involved.
- 5.4. A written record will be kept of all formal complaints (Stage 2 of this procedure), and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a panel hearing (Stage 3). The record will include details of any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Records will be kept for a minimum of seven years.

For the academic year 2022 - 2023 the school received no formal complaints.