

Parents' Complaints Procedure

Availability

This procedure is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils via the public website and parent website. Additionally a copy may be requested free of charge from the school office as indicated on the public website.

Relevance

This Procedure only applies to parents of currently registered pupils. It does not apply to parents of prospective pupils or past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

Appeals against exclusions are dealt with using the process defined in stage 3 of this Policy. In the case of exclusions stage 3 will be completed as quickly as possible.

Introduction

The school aims to provide the best possible quality of teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. Nevertheless it is acknowledged that, as in most organisations, things do not always go smoothly and it may occasionally be the case that parents wish to make a complaint. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the procedures outlined below. These procedures should be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding Policy*.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that their child/children will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their child/children raise in good faith.

Values Underpinning the Process

- Pupils learn best if there is an effective partnership between school staff and parents.
- All members of the school community are entitled to have their points of view heard.

- Unresolved complaints might result in unhealthy conflict.

Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively and it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible.

If a complaint is made during a school holiday, the complaint will be acknowledged as soon as practicable but any investigation or resolution and associated timescales may not commence until the School returns for the next academic term. For the purposes of this procedure school holidays and half terms are not considered working days.

During term time all complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days.

The school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 10 working days.

Stage 3 complaints (the Appeal Panel Hearing) will be completed within 20 working days of the receipt of the parents' notification of the desire to move to stage 3. However, delays to this period may happen as a result of difficulties in finding a mutually convenient date when the complainant and panel members can attend or if the panel needs further time to consider additional evidence and reach its decision.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's personal tutor in the first instance. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the personal tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the personal tutor to consult the Head of Year, subject teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Complaints should be dealt with, as far as is possible, at the point of first contact.
- Should the parent not be satisfied with the response to the complaint then a formal complaint should be made in writing directly to the Head as indicated in stage 2 of this procedure within 5 working days of the judgement on the complaint.
- In the event of a complaint being made against the Head, parents may address their complaint in writing directly to the Chair of the Trustees care of the school address. The Chair of Trustees will nominate the Deputy Head to manage the complaint.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- When a complaint can not be resolved informally and is received in writing then the Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of

action to take.

- It may be necessary for the Head (or his nominee) to carry out further investigations.
- The Head (or his nominee) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint which will be recorded in the complaint log.
- 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 complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- Should the complainant not be satisfied with the response to the formal complaint, the complainant may proceed to stage 3 of this Procedure within 5 working days of the receipt of the judgement on the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Trustees will nominate the Deputy Head to undertake the actions applicable to the Head in the above bullet points.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If the complainant seeks to invoke stage 3, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution the Head will ask the Chair of Trustees to appoint a panel consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint at least one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school.
- The Chair of Trustees, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and ideally within 10 working days of receipt of the complainant's notification of the request for a panel hearing.
- The panel hearing will always proceed unless the complainant indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If the complainant does not attend then the panel will consider the complaint in their absence. The school will do all that is reasonable to accommodate the complainant's availability and consider any comments they may have concerning panel composition.
- 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 three days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complainant's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete ideally within 10 working days of the hearing. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person being complained about. The Panel's findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on school premises by the proprietor and the Head.
- The decision of the Panel will be final. If the complainant is unable to accept the final decision of the panel investigation then the school reserves the right to dissolve the partnership between the school and the family.

Recording Complaints

The school will keep a written record in the Complaint Log of all complaints formally received in writing under stage 2 and stage 3, documenting whether they were resolved at stage 2 or proceeded to stage 3. The Complaint Log will also record the actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). Complaints which do not have a safeguarding angle will be retained for a minimum of seven years.

For complaints concerning allegations of abuse, a comprehensive summary will be kept until the accused member of staff reaches normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if this is longer.

During the preceding academic year 2022-2023 no complaints proceeded to stage 2 or stage 3 of this procedure.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Parents may make a complaint directly to ISI. Contact details for ISI are as follows:
Independent Schools Inspectorate , CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.
Telephone 020 7600 0100

Review

This procedure will be reviewed in July 2024.

Signed: