

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1.0 Introduction

We are committed to providing the best teaching and well-being care it can for its pupils. It is hoped that any worries or complaints can be dealt with informally through the well-being framework, but if not the school has a complaints procedure which is set out below. Formal complaints are rare, reflecting the good relationships between students, parents and the school which enables most matters to be resolved informally.

A written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved informally or through the Complaints Procedure, will be kept by the Head of Compliance, Safeguarding and Operations and the record will be monitored by the Executive Head. Records of complaints which proceed to Stage 3 will be kept by the Managing Director. The record will show the action taken, and whether or not the complaint is upheld.

2.0 What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a parent (or someone *in loco parentis*) with a real or perceived problem. Any complaint made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, or any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School, is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint may arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. The School is here for the students, and parents can be assured that their child will not be penalised for a complaint that is made in good faith, whether justified or not.

3.0 Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated confidentially. Papers generated by or for the purposes of the Complaints Procedure will be kept confidential to the parents, the members of staff involved, the members of the complaints panel in Stage 3, the Executive Head, Managing Director, Chair of Governors, and staff relevant to the processing of the complaint. Information relating to the complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the School's responsibilities under data protection legislation.

Information may be disclosed where the school's regulator requests access to information, and in so far as it is required of the school by any other legal obligation.

4.0 The Complaints Procedure: Stage 1, Informal Resolution

- 4.1 It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 4.2 If parents have a concern or complaint, they are encouraged to contact the Home Room teacher or relevant staff member in the first instance. The staff member receiving the complaint will acknowledge the complaint promptly and aim to resolve the complaint with the student or parents. They will consult with more senior staff. Complaints made to another member of staff will normally be referred to the Home Room teacher to follow up in the first instance.
- 4.3 The Home Room teacher and, where appropriate, the Head of Division, will speak with or meet the parents as soon as practical and within 7 working days of the complaint to attempt to resolve the situation.
- 4.4 If parents remain dissatisfied after discussion with the Home Room teacher, they may raise a complaint directly to the Head of Division, Head of Compliance, Safeguarding and Operations or the Executive Head who will acknowledge the complaint promptly.
- 4.5 Within 7 working days of the complaint being acknowledged, the Head of Division, Head of Compliance, Safeguarding and Operations or the Executive Head will look into the complaint, consulting as appropriate with the staff who know the student best and the Head of Division and, if appropriate, will meet the parents, to discuss the complaint and attempt to resolve the complaint.
- 4.6 If, after this meeting, there is no satisfactory resolution, parents may proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 4.7 If the complaint is about the Executive Head, and it cannot be resolved informally, the parents should send the complaint, in writing, to the Managing Director, who will liaise with the Chair of Governors, the parents and, as appropriate, the Executive Head. Contact details of the Managing Director are available on request from:
 - 4.7.1 The Executive Head;
 - 4.7.2 The Financial Controller
 - 4.7.3 The Chair of the PTA.

5.0 The Complaints Procedure: Stage 2, Formal Resolution

- 5.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved by Stage 1, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Executive Head. The Executive Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- 5.2 The Executive Head, or a senior member of staff, normally the Head of Division, will meet the parents concerned, as soon as feasible and normally within five working days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 5.3 If the complaint is not resolved at that stage, or if further investigation is required, the Executive Head will, within 5 working days, either provide to the parents and other concerned parties a written decision with an explanation or, if further investigation is required, a report setting out the next steps to be taken and the timescale for them. Following that further investigation, the Executive Head will provide to the parents and other concerned parties a written decision with an explanation.
- 5.4. If the complaint is against the Executive Head, it will be passed to the Chair of Governors, who may call for further reports and any relevant documents, and who may meet members of staff and the parents. The Chair will then make a decision and inform the parents and relevant members of staff of the decision and of the reasons for it.
- 5.5 If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, they may proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

6.0 The Complaints Procedure: Stage 3, Appeals Procedure

- 6.1 If parents wish to proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure, they should give notice in writing to the Managing Director. The complaint will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration, and the following procedure will apply.
- 6.2 Appeals against exclusions will be considered under this stage 3 process. They will be dealt with as soon as practicable so as to avoid detriment to the student's schooling.
- 6.3 The Managing Director will acknowledge the written notice promptly and will refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors who will appoint the members of the Complaints Panel. The Managing Director will act as secretary to the Complaints Panel. The Managing Director will report to the Chair and the Executive Head to confirm that consideration of the complaint is proceeding in accordance with this procedure but not in respect of the substance of the panel's consideration. The outcome will be communicated to the complainant, Chair and Executive Head in accordance with the process set out in the paragraphs below.
- 6.4 The Complaints Panel will consist of three members, two of whom will be Governors and one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school, normally one of the Senior Independent Advisors to the Board. None of the members will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- 6.5 The Managing Director will, not later than five working days before the Complaints Panel meets with the parents and staff of the school to hear evidence and argument (the "Hearing"), provide copies of all relevant papers relating to the complaint to each member of the Complaints Panel and to the parents. The relevant papers will include the complaint in writing made by the parents and any relevant documents provided by them, and the response by the school and members of staff, so as to set out details of the School's investigations and actions

to date, and its conclusions.

- 6.6 The Complaints Panel will determine the terms of reference and the steps to be taken leading up to and during the Hearing. It will seek to establish if there are gaps in information, and it may request further facts, evidence or analysis ahead of the Hearing.
- 6.7 The Managing Director will arrange and schedule the Hearing. The Hearing will take place as soon as the parents and the members of the Complaints Panel are available and the relevant papers have been assembled. The aim will be to hold the Hearing within six weeks following receipt by the Managing Director of the written notice from the parents.
- 6.8 The parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Hearing will proceed even if parents choose not to attend unless they indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed.
- 6.9 If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the complaint at the Hearing without the need for further investigation or evidence. Where further investigation or evidence is required the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out or gathered, and in what time period. The aim will be that any further investigation or evidence gathering should be completed within 14 working days. The outcome of further investigation or evidence gathering will be circulated to the parents and the School for comments. The Complaints Panel may then reconvene to consider the outcome of further investigations or evidence. If it does reconvene, it will decide whether the parents and the School should be present.
- 6.10 After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.
- 6.11 The Managing Director will send a copy of the decision and the reasons for it to the parents, members of staff involved, the Executive Head and the Chair of Board of Directors. It will be kept confidential but will be available for inspection at the school.
- 6.12 The Board of Directors shall consider the decision and recommendations of the complaints panel fully. The Board of Directors shall consider whether any further action should be implemented by the school in relation to the complaint.

7.0 Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged promptly and within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days, and Stage 3 within the time set out in paragraph 6 of that Stage.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

8.0 Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3, and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records and a chronology of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name 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)

9.0 Confidentiality

All information about pupils and their families is confidential. Proceedings at all meetings are regarded as confidential and are not to be reported to pupils unless a decision to this effect has been taken at the staff meeting.

Pupils are encouraged to talk to staff about problems but confidentiality can never be promised; there may be instances when a teacher has to pass information on, whether because of school rules (e.g. illegal drugs, sexual relationships) or the pupil's own welfare.

Teachers cannot promise confidentiality which could put them in a difficult position both professionally and in needing to refer to experts. Specific personal advice and complete confidentiality on sex and drug related matters can only be obtained from the School Doctor.

Please also refer to the Data Protection Policy.