

PARENTAL FORMAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

(this policy is available to parents either by request to the School Office or to view on the School's website)

Principles

Parents may have legitimate concerns about their children's education. Most parents do not regard such concerns as complaints in the formal sense. Nevertheless, the School will seek to ensure that their concerns will be addressed with appropriate urgency and thoroughness. If matters raised as concerns are not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the dissatisfied party may wish to appeal through the formal complaints procedure, which is outlined below.

Every formal complaint is a matter of concern to the School and will be investigated with due urgency and thoroughness. Whenever a complaint is upheld, every effort will be made to rectify the issue and, if necessary, action will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem. The School will not investigate anonymous complaints or allegations but confidentiality will be respected.

Informal stage

Any complaint must be raised informally in the first instance with the pupil's Form Tutor. If the complaint relates to the Form Tutor then it should be raised in the first instance with the Deputy Head. Complaints relating to the Deputy Head should be raised in the first instance with the Headmaster and complaints relating to the Headmaster should be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors. It is expected that the complainant and the School will seek in the informal stage to resolve the complaint in a constructive way. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally then the complainant may make a formal complaint in writing in accordance with the following formal procedure.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Complaints from parents or others

- Formal complaints by telephone should be directed to the Headmaster's PA who will complete a complaint form (Formal Complaint Record) and refer the matter to the Headmaster or the Deputy Head in his absence.
- Formal Verbal complaints made by a visitor to the School will be referred to any available member of the senior management team who will complete a complaint form.

- Formal written complaints received by School Staff should be copied immediately to the Headmaster's PA who will complete a complaint form and attach the copy letter.

Complaints from pupils

Pupils who feel they have been unfairly treated are encouraged to speak to their Form Tutor, Senior Teacher or Deputy Head. He/she will investigate the complaint and will seek to resolve the matter informally between the pupil and the member of staff. The Headmaster will be informed of the complaint. Where the complaint or subsequent investigation raises issues of disciplinary significance, the matter should be referred immediately to the Headmaster or his Deputy.

Complaints received by Governors

Verbal complaints: in normal circumstances, the Governor should advise the complainant to contact the School direct. If the complainant is reluctant to do so, the Governor should ensure he/she understands the full facts as perceived by the complainant without making any commitment or comment on the issue, except that it will be investigated and a response will be provided either direct to the complainant or via the governor. The Governor should then discuss the matter with the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

Formal written complaints: it is the responsibility of the receiving Governor to ensure that the complainant is acknowledged within three working days of receipt. The letter of complaint should be passed to the Headmaster and the Chairman of Governors should be informed. The matter will be investigated in the usual way and a copy of the response sent to the receiving governor and the Chairman of Governors.

In both cases a Formal Complaint Record should be kept.

Timescale

Informal complaints to the School will be acknowledged within seven working days from the point of receipt during term time and within twenty-one working days during a school holiday period. This is particularly the case during the Summer holiday period when Staff may not be so readily available. When a matter requires fuller investigation than is possible within this timescale, the complainant will be informed and an indication given of when a final response may be expected.

Formal complaints to the School will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt and an initial response will be provided within six working days during term

time. When a matter requires fuller investigation than is possible within this timescale, the complainant will be informed and an indication given of when a final response can be expected. When a formal complaint is made during the holiday period an acknowledgement will be sent within seven working days of receipt and an initial response will be provided within twenty-one working days. When a matter requires fuller investigation than is possible within this timescale, the complainant will be informed and an indication given of when a final response can be expected.

Processing of complaints

The Headmaster will investigate or cause investigation to be made of all complaints, except in cases relating to alleged misconduct of the Headmaster. Where such allegations have been made against the Headmaster, the Deputy Head may be authorised to investigate in the first instance.

No action will be taken without the subject(s) of the complaint having opportunity to comment on the complaint and to suggest independent witnesses who might be called upon to provide evidence to the investigator.

Most complaints are satisfactorily resolved by the appropriate investigator reporting back, usually in writing, to the complainant. If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may revert back to the Headmaster. If a parent feels that the Headmaster has acted unreasonably in the exercise of his duties and powers, he/she may appeal in writing to the Chairman of Governors, via the School Office (correspondence should be marked 'Confidential' and will be sent on unopened). He will respond to this written complaint within twenty-eight working days of receipt of this complaint.

Where the parent is not satisfied with the Chairman's response to the complaint, he/she may request a hearing before a panel appointed by the Chairman. The panel will comprise two Governors and one individual who is independent of the management and running of the school. This panel will be convened within twenty-eight working days from the Chairman's receipt of the parental request for this hearing (which must be made in writing and sent via the School Office). All three members of the panel will not have had direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. The parent or parents concerned may attend this panel hearing and may be accompanied if they wish. If this is the case they must notify the Chair of Governors no later than fourteen working days in advance of the hearing itself, so that the School may make any further arrangements for any representation that it may need. The panel will make findings and recommendations as necessary. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given, within twenty-eight working days, to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and will be available on the School's premises for inspection by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

The outcome of the investigation and any action taken as a result of any complaint will be entered in the record of complaints which will be maintained by the Clerk to the Governors. It will show whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage by the Chairman or proceeded to a panel hearing. The Headmaster will provide a report each term to the Governing Body on complaints received and any implications arising.

The Role of the Governing Body

Complaints about the School's policies or procedures will be referred to the Chairman of Governors for consideration.

Complaints about the Headmaster or any Governor should be directed to the Chairman of Governors. Allegations of misconduct will be dealt with according to the relevant school disciplinary procedures.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available on request from the Clerk to the Governors, care of the School.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

Policy due for next review: September 2011

FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECORD

Member of Staff to whom complaint was reported:	Date complaint received:	Date reported to Headmaster:
Complainant's name and address: Telephone No.: Day Evening		
Nature of complaint		
Pupils involved: (name and form)		
Action taken:		
Date of acknowledgement:		
Interview with Complainant: notes attached Y/N		
Date of final letter: copy attached Y/N		
Name(s) of the Leadership Group involved in investigation:		