



Policy on Formal Complaints 2021-2022

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This complaints procedure is available to parents of pupils and is on our website. A copy of it can also be supplied by the School 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. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

1.2. Separate procedures apply if a child protection issue has arisen (see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy) or if a pupil has been expelled or asked to leave (see the Expulsion Appeals Procedure). These policies are available on the School website.

1.3. All time scales in this document refer to term time. During school holidays, the time scale will need to be extended if relevant staff are unavailable.

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 daughter'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 Head of Department, Senior Teacher, or the Head.

2.3. Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Senior Teacher, or the Head will be referred to the relevant form tutor or subject teacher unless the individual receiving the complaint deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

2.4. The form tutor or subject teacher 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 form tutor or subject teacher and 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 the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head stating explicitly the wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure and including full contact details. The Head 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, 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 her decision.

3.6. Parents will be informed of the decision 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), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

4.2. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. These will be two Governors and an additional person who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Clerk. The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days.

4.3. 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.

4.4. 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.

4.5. 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.

4.6. 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, within 20 working days of the Hearing.

4.7. 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. 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) and the action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld).

5.3. Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure.

For the academic year 2020 - 2021 the School received no formal complaints.