



# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

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# Complaints Procedure for Parents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school Safeguarding Policy.

## Introduction

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

- *A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where the complainant requires a way of having their concern heard, investigated and resolved.*
- *This procedure is only applicable to complaints raised by parents of current students. Once a pupil has left the school the procedure is no longer applicable (unless the complaint is already under investigation at the time of leaving).*
- *This policy is made available on the school website.*
- *A working week or working day refers to weeks/days (Monday to Friday) when the school is in session.*

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A record will be kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. The School will make available the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, on request, to parents of current or prospective students.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

## Stage I – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's class teacher (Early Years and Primary) or Form Tutor (Secondary) or in the case of nursery students, their Key Person. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the Class Teacher/Form Tutor/Key Person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Executive Principal of Phase. In Early Years, this would be the Executive Principal of Early Years, in Primary, Executive Principal of Primary and in Secondary, Executive Principal of Middle Year (Years 7-11.)
- Complaints made directly to the Executive Principal of Phase will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher, Form Tutor/Key Person unless the Executive Principal of Phase deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The relevant staff member 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 two working weeks from receipt or in the event that the Class Teacher/ Form Tutor/Key Person and the

parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Executive Principal. The Executive Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Executive Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally within one working week of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Executive Principal to carry out further investigations. If so, the Executive Principal will update the complainant every ten working days.
- The Executive Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Executive Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Executive Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure and contact the Executive Principal within seven days of being notified of the Stage 2 decision. The Executive Principal will then refer the complaint to the CEO within three working days.
- A written record is held of all complaints made to the school under the formal part of the complaints procedure. In relation to these complaints, the school will record whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a panel, and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (whether or not it is upheld).

## **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution at Stage 2, they must address their complaint in writing to the CEO, who can be contacted through the Executive Principal or School Manager.
- The CEO will reply to the parents acknowledging the complaint within five working days of receipt in writing. This letter will inform them that the Complaints Panel will hear their complaint within fourteen working days.
  - The CEO will appoint each member of the Complaints Panel, will nominate the Chair of the Panel and a Clerk to the Panel. The Panel is to consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk may be a member of the school staff. The CEO

will pass particulars of the complaint to the Panel, who will meet independently of the CEO from that point.

#### *Procedures for Preparation for a Complaints Panel Hearing*

- The Clerk should convene an initial meeting of the Complaints Panel and arrange a date and time for the Hearing. The Clerk should give all available relevant documentation to the Panel members. 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.
- The Clerk should then write to the Complainant, the Executive Principal and any other relevant staff witnesses to inform them:
  - The date, time and venue of the hearing
  - The aims and objectives of the hearing and how it will be conducted
  - That documentation for Panel consideration must be presented to the Clerk no later than five working days before the hearing takes place.
  - The right to bring along one other person to provide support. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. **Legal representation will not be permitted.**
  - How and when the Panel will reach and communicate their decision in writing.
- It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure that all parties receive relevant documents at least three working days before the date of the Hearing so as to allow individuals to familiarise themselves with the evidence.

#### *Format of a Complaints Panel Hearing*

The Complaints Panel Hearing should take the following suggested format:

- The Chair of the meeting will introduce all parties to one another and explain the principles, objectives and format of the hearing. The Clerk will take minutes which will be made available at the same time as the Panel's decision.
- The Complainant will be given the opportunity to explain their complaint. Following this, the Executive Principal and the Panel members may ask the complainant questions.
- The Executive Principal will then be given an opportunity to explain the School's official response, interpretation or view about the complaint. Following this the complainant and Panel members will be allowed to question the Executive Principal.
- Each party will be given the opportunity to call any witnesses and question witnesses called by the other parties.
- The Executive Principal and Complainant will be given the opportunity to give final statements in relation to the matter.
- The Chair of the meeting should bring the Hearing to a conclusion.

Following the Hearing, the procedure should be as follows:

- The Complaints Panel members should consider the complaint and all the evidence presented by both parties. After all the evidence on both sides has been considered, the Complaints Panel members will:
  - a) reach a majority decision on the complaint findings;
  - b) decide together whether the complaint outcomes sought are upheld in full, partially upheld, or not upheld;
  - c) decide upon the appropriate action (if any) to be taken;
  - d) suggest changes to, or request review of, the School's existing Policy or Procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
  
- Within five working days of the Hearing, the Chair of the Panel should write to the Complainant, the CEO and, where relevant, the person complained about, setting out the Panel's findings and recommendations.
  
- The Clerk of the Panel will ensure that a copy of the Chair's letter is made available for inspection on the school premises by the Directors and, where relevant, the person complained of.