



Culford

# Complaints Policy and Review Procedure

## Overview Statement

This procedure is for use by parents (and guardians) of current pupils of the School in circumstances in which they have a complaint regarding their own or their child's treatment and which does not fall within the scope of other procedures. For the avoidance of doubt, this procedure does not apply to parents (and guardians) of prospective pupils or pupils who have left the School voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the School).

The School will make written records of all formal complaints (including any relating to the boarding provision), the date on which they were received, any meetings or interviews held in relation to the complaints, and whether they were resolved at the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing. The records will include any actions taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld). Records regarding formal complaints which do not have safeguarding implications shall be retained for a minimum of 7 years.

Where the complaint is a child protection or safeguarding matter, Culford's Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy will be followed and the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Head should be contacted in the first instance.

## Informal Stage (Stage 1)

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally, normally within 14 days. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of parents' complaints are better addressed through informal resolution. Parents with complaints should, in the first instance, raise these informally with an appropriate member of staff (which in most cases is likely to be the pupil's Tutor, Housemaster/Housemistress, Head of Year or a Head of Department). In most cases, this will lead to a satisfactory resolution.

During holidays the School will do what it reasonably can to reply promptly to parents and to follow the procedures within this policy. It may be the case that, due to the unavailability of key personnel (staff, pupils and parents), responding in full to a parental complaint can only be completed during term time.

## Formal Stage (Stage 2)

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis and the parent remains dissatisfied, then they should put their complaint in writing using the Stage 2 form below, addressed to the Head of the relevant part of the School (Pre-Prep, Prep, Senior). The written complaint should outline the nature of the complaint, why they remain dissatisfied and the resolution sought. If the Head or a decision taken by him/her is the subject of the complaint, the written complaint should be addressed to the

Head of Culford School (if it is related to the Head of Pre-Prep or Head of Prep) or the Chair of the Governing Board if related to the Head of Culford School.

In most cases, the Head will communicate with the parent, normally within 7 working days of receiving the complaint, to acknowledge receipt. If the complaint is received in the final days of the term or outside term-time, this may take up to 28 days. In some cases, the Head's initial communication itself will lead to a resolution of the complaint.

Upon receiving a written complaint, the Head of the relevant part of the school may feel it necessary to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Having carried out their investigation, the Head shall inform the parents in writing of the decision and the reasons for the decision within 21 working days of receiving the complaint. If it is inappropriate for the Head of Culford School to deal with the complaint (e.g. because she is the subject of the complaint or has been materially involved in circumstances directly involved with the complaint), the Chair of the Governing Board will (if necessary) investigate and respond in writing within 21 working days of receiving the complaint. If the parents remain dissatisfied with the decision reached at Stage 2, they should apply for a review hearing.

### **Applications for Review Hearing (Stage 3)**

Parents must only apply for a review hearing after the informal and formal stages above have been exhausted. The application for a review hearing should be in writing using the Stage 3 form below and must outline the nature of the parent's complaint, why they remain dissatisfied and the resolution sought. The letter should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Board, Culford School, Culford, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 6TX and should be sent within 7 working days of the date a written Stage 2 decision was received from the Head or Chair of the Governing Board.

### **Review Panel**

The Review Panel will comprise at least two members of the Governing Board nominated by the Chair of the Governing Board, and one person who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The members of the panel will, so far as is reasonably possible, have no previous detailed knowledge of the case or of the pupil(s) and parents concerned and will not usually include the Chair of the Governing Board. The panel will elect its own Chair. The Chair of the Governing Board, on behalf of the panel, will formally acknowledge the application for a review hearing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as time allows (normally within 21 days, though this may take longer outside term-time).

### **Review Hearing**

The hearing will take place at the School or such other place as the Chair of the Review Panel should determine. Those present at the hearing will normally be:

- The members of the Review Panel
- The Head (unless this is considered inappropriate because she is the subject of the complaint)
- Other members of staff (if appropriate)
- Parents or those with parental responsibility
- The pupil (if appropriate)
- Clerk to the Governing Board or someone to take a note of the hearing

Parents may be accompanied by a friend, or a member of staff acting as a friend if required, but not a legal representative. Parents should inform the Review Panel of the individuals attending the hearing 3 working days before the hearing. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the parents (and if applicable their friend) are able to attend the hearing but the hearing will proceed in their absence if they are not able to attend.

### **Documents**

Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of the relevant documents. The parents shall be entitled to copies of any documents that will be considered at the review hearing. If the Review Panel feels it is important, it may require that additional details connected to the complaint or related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of material outlining these details should be given to all involved parties at least 3 working days prior to the hearing.

### **Proceedings**

The proceedings will be chaired by a member of the Review Panel and conducted in a formal manner. Notes will be kept of the main points that arise. If the Head considers it necessary in the interests of a pupil or the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chair of the Review Panel may require that the name of that person, and the reason for withholding it, be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chair may direct that the person be identified. Parents will be given an opportunity, as will the School, to have their say. If possible, the Review Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. However, the Review Panel can investigate further as it sees fit.

### **Decision**

The Review Panel will consider the points raised by the parents and the evidence gathered and will make a decision about the complaint and make recommendations. The decision and any recommendations of the Review Panel will be notified in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governing Board and (where appropriate) the person(s) complained of, by the Chair of the Review Panel, usually within 7 working days of the hearing, subject to further investigations being required. The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

The School will not engage in further correspondence regarding the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of this policy. Repeated attempts made by parents to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of this policy, will be regarded as vexatious.

A copy of the decision and any recommendations will be retained at the School for reference by the Head and the Governing Board. In exceptional circumstances, in order to ensure a fair decision-making process, deviation from the foregoing procedure may be authorised by the Review Panel. Parents will be notified of any such deviations relevant to any review that they request. Any such deviation will be within the standards set out in The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The School pledges to treat all complaints seriously and, so far as reasonably possible, all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be treated confidentially within the requirements of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations

2014 except where the Secretary of State or a Board 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. Similarly, confidentiality is expected of the parents, the subject(s) of the complaint and any others who may be involved in the proceedings or have access to any related documents. These procedures and those for pupils have regard to Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Please note that the number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year (including those relating to boarding provision) is available from the School upon request.

Methodist Independent School Trust MIST

Contact details are as follows:

Methodist Schools, 27 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HH

Tel: 02079353723

Email: [admin@methodistschools.org.uk](mailto:admin@methodistschools.org.uk)

Independent Schools Inspectorate

Contact details are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Tel: 0207 600 0100

Email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

Please see below for the Formal Stage (Stage 2) and the Application for Review Hearing (Stage 3) forms

## Formal Stage (Stage 2) Complaint Submission Form

Please complete and return to:

Head  
Culford School  
Culford  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP28 6TX

[head@culford.co.uk](mailto:head@culford.co.uk)

who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Postal address:
Postcode:
Day time phone number:
Evening phone number:
Email address:

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, events, key evidence etc.) in order to allow the matter to be fully investigated. (You may attach additional documents if you wish; please be sure to number them clearly.)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. with whom have you spoken or to whom have you written and what has been the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the issue at this stage?

If you are attaching additional documents, please number these attachments and list details below.

Signature:

Date:

For School use Only

Date complaint form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Date complaint referred:

## Application for Review Hearing (Stage 3) Complaint Submission Form

Please complete and return to:

Head  
Culford School  
Culford  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP28 6TX

[head@culford.co.uk](mailto:head@culford.co.uk)

who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Postal address:
Postcode:
Day time phone number:
Evening phone number:
Email address:

Dear Sir/Madam I submitted a formal complaint to the School on ..... and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed and/or the outcome. My complaint was dealt with at Stage 2 of the School's procedures and I received a response from ..... on .....
I am dissatisfied by the way the procedure was carried out because:

--

and/or by the final outcome because:

(you may continue on separate sheets or attach additional documents if you wish. In this case, please number the attachments and list details below)

What actions do you think might resolve the issue at this stage?

I would like the panel to conduct a hearing

a) On the papers

b) At a meeting that I will attend

At the meeting I would like to be accompanied by the following:

Signature:

Date:

For use by the Clerk to the Governing Body

Date complaint form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Date complaint referred: