

Introduction

Lady Eleanor Holles School Foshan has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a Concern or Complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Policy. It is the School's wish to be a community that listens and is able to respond in a positive, appropriate and sympathetic fashion when Concerns and Complaints are raised.

All Concerns and Complaints need to be handled seriously. An expression of Concern, or a simple query, may grow into a contentious matter if it is perceived that the issue has been brushed aside. Equally, issues with the potential to become acutely difficult may be resolved if they are handled well at the initial stage.

General Principles

Complaints which are made anonymously will generally not be considered under this Policy.

Wherever possible Complaints should be made within three months of the relevant incident or circumstances. Complaints may be considered after this timescale in exceptional circumstances.

Where this Policy provides for a particular Stage be undertaken by a particular member of staff of the School and that person is unavailable for whatever reason, the School shall delegate or transfer the responsibilities to such member of staff as it deems appropriate to undertake such Stage.

Where this document refers to parents of a pupil it shall be deemed to include guardians or other person given responsibility for the welfare of a pupil, as appropriate.

Timescales, in this policy, are set out in terms of days. Days shall mean Monday through Friday, excluding public holidays, in term time.

The Complaints Policy for LEHF School is intended to apply solely for parents of current registered pupils of the school. The Policy does not apply to parents of prospective pupils and only applies to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The Policy does not cover exclusions which are governed by the Suspensions and Exclusion Policy.

What constitutes a Concern or Complaint

The school defines an informal complaint as a concern, concerns are dealt with under Stage 1 of this policy. A complaint will be defined by the school as a concern where a parent informs the School whether orally or in writing that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or where it has acted unfairly in its dealing with a pupil. A Concern may be raised about the School as a whole, a specific department or activity, or an individual member of staff. This list is not exhaustive and the School shall treat any expression of dissatisfaction, whether real or perceived, as a Concern. The Concern should be raised with a member of the Senior Management Team.

A formal complaint is any instance where a parent notifies the school, in writing to the Head teacher that the school has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done. It is anticipated that in most cases any Complaint will have first been raised as a Concern and Stage One of this Policy will have been completed. Complaints will be dealt with under Stage Two of this policy.

Overview

The procedure for raising a Concern or bringing a Complaint to the School is set out below and comprises of three stages:

- Stage One: Informal resolution for Concerns;
- Stage Two: Formal resolution; and
- Stage Three: Panel hearing.

Stage One - Informal Resolution for Concerns

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

If parents wish to raise a Concern about an educational issue (relating to the classroom, the curriculum, or provision for learning difficulties and disabilities/special educational needs) or a pastoral/co-curricular issue (relating to matters outside the classroom) they should contact their pupil's Tutor in the Senior School or class teacher in the Prep School. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway.

If the Tutor or class teacher cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary in the case of the Senior School to consult the relevant House Master, Head of Department, Head of Faculty or SLT. In the case of the Prep School, such consultation will be with SLT or the Head of Prep.

A Concern relating to a financial matter should always be made in writing and addressed or personally delivered to the Headteacher.

A Concern raised directly with SLT will usually be referred for further action to the pupil's Tutor or House Master unless SLT deems it appropriate for the Concern to be otherwise dealt with.

When dealing with any Concern the school will make a written record to include the essential details and the date on which it was raised. Wherever possible the school will acknowledge a written Concern by telephone, email or letter within five days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the school holidays. Should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding two term time weeks) or if the Concern cannot be brought to a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with a Complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Policy.

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

If a Concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should make a Complaint in writing to the Headteacher. Full written details of the nature of the Complaint,

any relevant materials or documents and full contact details should be sent by the parents in an envelope addressed to the Headteacher and posted or personally delivered to the correspondence address detailed on the School's website. The Headteacher will acknowledge the Complaint within five days of receiving it.

In most cases and wherever possible, within ten days of receiving the Complaint, the Headteacher will contact the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The nature of the Complaint may require the Headteacher to carry out further investigations. The Headteacher may ask any member of staff to act as investigator and/or may involve one or more of the School's Governors. If a Complaint is received within two weeks of term ending, the Complaint is likely to take longer to resolve owing to school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

After full consideration of the Complaint including discussions with all relevant parties and the completion of any necessary investigations, the Headteacher will determine the course of action to be taken by the School.

The school will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to any Complaint.

Wherever possible the parents will be informed in writing of the decision of the Headteacher within twenty days of the Complaint being made. The Headteacher will give reasons for the decision.

If a Complaint is made against the Headteacher, the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. Such a Complaint will be dealt with under Stage Two of this Policy with the Chair adopting the role identified for the Headteacher

If the parents are not satisfied with any decision reached under Stage Two of this Policy, they should proceed to Stage Three.

Stage Three - Panel Hearing

If the parents seek to invoke Stage Three, they will be referred to the Governors for a Panel Hearing. Requests will normally only be considered if the parents have completed Stage Two of this Policy and then have made a request in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within ten days of receiving the Stage Two decision from the Headteacher. The parents should clearly set out the detail of their dissatisfaction with the Stage Two decision and the grounds of their Complaint. The parents should include with their letter a list of documents or materials that they believe the School is in possession of and that they wish the panel to see.

The Clerk will acknowledge the parents' request in writing within five days of receipt and will call a Panel Hearing on behalf of the Chair of Governors. A Panel Hearing will be called as soon as is reasonably practicable, normally within twenty days of receiving the parents' request. The Panel will not normally sit during the school holidays.

Save in quite exceptional circumstances the Panel will not consider any new area of Complaint which has not been raised previously as part of the Complaint.

The Chair of Governors may nominate members of the Panel ensuring that no Panel member is themselves subject of or in any other way related to or conflicted by the Complaint. The Panel will consist of at least three people not involved in the matters detailed in the Complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair shall nominate the chairmanship of the Panel.

If the Complaint is made against the Chair of Governor, the Vice Chair of Governors shall adopt the role set out for the Chair of Governors in Stage Three of this policy.

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 no later than five days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend, for example. As this Policy is conducted under the auspices of the school's Policies and Procedures legal representation is not thought to be necessary. However, should the parents wish to be accompanied by a legal representative the school must be notified in writing at least five days before the hearing and the school will then be entitled to have its own legal representative in attendance at the Hearing.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the Complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. If the Panel decides that further investigation is necessary, the hearing may be adjourned.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts, it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall be completed within ten days of the hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Having reached a decision, the Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it as soon as practically possible. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Headteacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the Complaint was made.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all Complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. It may, from time to time, be necessary for the School to disseminate details of a Complaint to members of the School community to facilitate a full and thorough investigation, by making a Complaint the parent(s) agree to this dissemination. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential by the Head's office.

A summary of Complaints, in a format which ensures confidentiality, will be brought to the attention of the Board of Governors.

Records of Complaints

The School maintains a ‘Complaints and Concerns Log’ which will be managed by the Head’s office. This log will be an electronic record of key Complaint and Concern information and brief details of the procedure followed and will state whether the matter was resolved. The log will also record any action(s) taken by the school as a result of those Complaints or Concerns.

As well as the aforementioned log, full written records will be kept of all Complaints, to include, all correspondence, statements, and other documents or materials. These written records will be kept for three years after the determination of the Complaint and will be kept confidential.

Review

The Senior Leadership Team of the school will review the Complaints and Concerns log at least once in each academic year. Stage One concerns are kept under on-going review by the Head.

Governor Oversight

A representative of the Governing body will meet with the Headteacher at least annually to review the Concerns and Complaints log and ensure the school is following its policy and keeping to the timescales Setout.

Appendix 1 - Time Scales (for guidance only)

Timescales of each stage of the procedure are set out below. It should be noted these are the maximum time scales that the School would reasonably expect a Concern or Complaint to be resolved or otherwise determined.

Timescales, in this policy, are set out in terms of days. Days shall mean Monday through Friday, excluding public holidays, in term time. Complaints received during the School holidays may be expected to take longer.

Stage One - Informal Resolution

Day 1 - concern made

Day 5 - school acknowledges the Concern in writing

Day 10 - Concern resolved or parents advised to proceed to Stage Two

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

Day 1 - written Complaint received by the Headteacher

Day 5 - Headteacher acknowledges receipt of Complaint

Day 10 - Headteacher has been in contact with parents to discuss Complaint

Day 20 - Headteacher writes to parents to confirm decision

Parents have 10 days from receipt of the Headteacher's Stage Two decision letter to request a Stage Three Panel Hearing.

Stage Three - Panel Hearing

Day 1 - Appeal request received by the Governors

Day 5 - Governors acknowledges receipt of appeal request

Day 20 - Panel Hearing completed

Day 30 - Panel will write to parents informing of the decisions