

P11 – Complaints

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The College has long prided itself on the quality of education provided to its pupils. However, if parents of current pupils do wish to raise a concern or a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure. All parents should feel able to raise a complaint in line with this policy without fear of being seen as a troublemaker. The complaints procedure applies to past pupils only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered, and it does not cover exclusions unless the College has indicated otherwise. Where referred to in this document, a “school day” is considered to be a day when the school is in session.
- 1.2 It can be helpful to refer to the 'Parent-College Communication Guide' as a frame of reference for where to direct specific concerns. This document is held on the parent portal and can also be requested from the College Office.

2.0 STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- 2.1 It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 2.2 If parents have a concern, they should normally contact the teacher or tutor of their child in the first instance. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means and to the satisfaction of parents. However, if the teacher or tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a member of the appropriate leadership team and for follow up conversations to be held, online or in person. If a concern is brought forward during the holidays, it will be noted by staff and ordinarily taken forward upon their return from holiday and when College session resumes. It should not be expected that concerns or complaints are managed when the school is not in session.
- 2.3 Concerns made directly to a member of a leadership team will usually be referred to the relevant tutor or teacher unless the member of a leadership team deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally. This will ordinarily be in line with the pyramids of communication that are referenced in the 'Parent-College Communication Guide'.
- 2.4 The tutor, teacher, or member of a leadership team will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved, or in the event that the tutor, teacher or member of a leadership team and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised that their concern will be considered by the Head of the Junior School or, in the Senior School, the Deputy Head

Academic or Deputy Head Pastoral, as appropriate. In most cases, this will involve a meeting to discuss the matter, which will normally be arranged within 5 school days of the concerns being forwarded.

- 2.5 When concerns are referred to the Head of the Junior School or a Senior School Deputy Head, they will review the concern and take remedial actions to try and resolve the matter. The outcome of this review will be a written response that will be communicated to the parent, normally within 5 school days of concern being heard. Should the parent feel that the matter is still not resolved, then they will be advised to proceed with a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

3.0 STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- 3.1 If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put a complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 3.2 In most cases, the Head will meet the parents concerned, normally within 5 school 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. These records will state whether the complaint is resolved following a formal procedure, or if it proceeds to a panel hearing.
- 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing, normally within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- 3.6 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure by writing to the Clerk to the Governors, within 15 school days of receiving the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, as presented by the Head.

4.0 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 (“the Panel”).
- 4.2 Stage 3 Complaints must be raised within a timely manner (such time period to be at the reasonable discretion of the Panel) and by no later than 15 school days after the notification date of the Stage 2 resolution, following the outcome of the previous Stage 2, to ensure that a panel is able to communicate with all the relevant people involved.
- 4.3 The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the

complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the College. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint. Where several parental complaints arise from a common issue, it is feasible that the common point could be heard jointly by the Panel.

- 4.4 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 10 school days prior to the hearing.
- 4.5 The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 4.6 If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint of the parents immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 4.7 Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 school days of the Hearing. 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, if any, recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, all members of the Governing Body and, where relevant, the person complained of. These findings and recommendations will be available on the school premises for purposes of inspection.
- 4.8 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 4.9 A written record is kept of all complaints at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of this procedure including details of the complaints, the steps that were taken and whether or not they were resolved following a formal procedure, including whether or not they proceeded to a panel hearing, and the action that was taken by the College as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld)
- 4.10 Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 school days. Although the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is responsible for inspecting the Early Years setting, parents should be aware that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint concerning our Early Years provision, they are entitled to make a complaint directly to Ofsted. They can download the Ofsted leaflet: "Complaints to Ofsted about Schools: Guidance for Parents" reference 080113 from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

During the 2022/23 academic year, 6 formal complaints were received by the College under Stage 2 and 3 of the Policy.

ISI 33a – Complaints procedure

NB School holiday periods are not classified as 'school days' and therefore delays may occur outside of term time

Complaints			
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