



Culford

Parents Complaints Procedure

Principles

The school aims to work with parents at all times in the best interests of their children. It therefore welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, pupils or others and undertakes to deal properly with any complaints they may have within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way. The school also aims to ensure that complaints do not rebound adversely on the complainant or others.

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

The Complaints Procedure

The following three stage procedure applies to any person raising a complaint:

- The first stage is to raise any concern informally with those immediately connected. This may be a teacher, tutor, housemaster/mistress, or a head of department. Where a concern is more serious, a complaint should be raised with a senior colleague responsible for the relevant area of school life. This may be a member of the school's senior management team; the Head, the Bursar, the Head of Prep, the Head of Pre-Prep or the Nursery Manager.

Written complaints relating to the school's EYFS requirements will be investigated and complainants notified of the outcome within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Complaint against the Head should be in writing to The Governors, c/o the Clerk to the Governors via email or at the School address. The Governors will investigate the matter thoroughly and provide a written reply as soon as possible, usually within 10 working days.

- The second stage allows anyone not satisfied that their concerns have been fully and fairly considered at the first stage, to complain to the next layer of authority beyond the colleague who has decided upon the complaint. This will usually be to the Head for complaints dealt with in the Pre-Prep, Prep School and Culford Nursery or by other staff in the Senior School; and direct to Governors for complaints dealt with by the Head. If you wish to make such an appeal, you should ordinarily do so within 5 working days of receipt of the original decision.

This may be done in person or in writing to senior staff and in writing to Governors. The complainant should detail the issue, the grounds of their dissatisfaction and any outcome they seek. The complaint will be investigated fully and a written reply will be provided as soon as possible, usually within ten working days during term time. If the complaint is made

outside term time or very close to the end of term the individual reviewing the complaint will confer with the parents within 5 working days after the start of the next term.

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may make a written application for a review of the complaint, which is the third stage.

The Review Panel

A review will be conducted by a panel, consisting of two members of the Board of Governors and an individual independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will have no previous detailed knowledge of the complaint. A request for review should be in the form of a formal letter written to the Clerk to the Governors. The complainant must state the nature of the complaint, the grounds for a review and the outcome they seek.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the review will take place within twenty working days of the request being received and sooner if convenient to all parties. Each member of the review panel, the Head and the complainant will be supplied with copies of any relevant documentation.

The review hearing will normally take place at the school. It is private and its proceedings are to be regarded by all parties as confidential, subject to law. Those present will normally be: the members of the panel, the Head, the complainant and the Clerk to the Governors. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend and by a member of the school staff if desired. The Head may also ask a further employee to attend. No legal representation on either side is appropriate.

The proceedings will be chaired by the Chairperson of the panel and will be conducted in an informal manner. All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. The proceedings will not be recorded except in the form of minutes of the main points taken by the Clerk to the Governors. All present will be entitled to write their own notes. All those attending are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chairperson may, at their discretion, adjourn or terminate the hearing if these expectations are not met.

The panel will consider the points raised by the complainant so far as these are relevant to: whether the facts of the case, so far as they relate to the complaint, have been clearly established; and whether action taken following the investigation of the complaint has been reasonable, and in accordance with School policies. The findings, recommendations and decisions of the panel will be final and will be notified to the complainant, the Head, and where relevant, any person complained about. They will be communicated in writing by the Chairperson of the panel, usually within 5 working days of the hearing being concluded. The above procedure is not intended in any way to limit the statutory rights of the complainant.

Where a complainant has indicated a wish to continue to the third stage of the process, for compliance purposes the review hearing will go ahead unless the complainant later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. The review hearing will, therefore, proceed notwithstanding a complainant deciding not to attend. If necessary, the panel will consider the complaint in absentia of the complainant and issue its findings to bring the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed will not prevent the school from accommodating the complainant's availability for dates or considering their comments concerning panel composition.

Exclusions

School policy states that: “In the event of a single act of gross misconduct or a repeated series of breaches of discipline, parents may be required to withdraw a pupil from the school if the Head judges it to be in the best interests of the school or the child.”

The matter will be treated as a formal complaint against the pupil in question. The Head will consider the facts and communicate their formal judgment to the parents concerned. The parents may seek a review under the process outlined above. Because the pupil in question will be suspended from school until the matter is resolved, both the Head and the review panel will be expected to expedite matters as swiftly as possible without prejudicing natural justice.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated in a confidential manner. Issues of confidentiality will be discussed on an individual basis with complainants, but it may be impractical to investigate a complaint without involving others. Similarly, complainants should recognise that it may be impossible to resolve a situation without naming individuals. Members of staff have a right to know about complaints which may be damaging to their reputation. Such complaints will be made known only to them and those who have to be consulted to resolve the complaint. Where issues of child safety or child protection are involved, the guidance on confidentiality in the School's Child Protection Policy will be followed.

Anonymous Complaints

Where anonymous complaints are received, the Head has discretion as to what action to take, if any, depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint. Anonymous complaints will be recorded.

Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints will be logged and the following details recorded:

- date the issue was raised
- name of complainant
- name of any person subject to complaint
- statement of the complaint
- location of detailed file
- person handling the complaint
- statement of outcome
- if the complaint was regarding boarding provision
- at what stage the complaint was resolved

The complaints log will contain simple but clear notes of all conversations about any source of dissatisfaction; it will be regularly monitored to identify any patterns that may require action.

The school will keep these records in accordance with its privacy notice and retention schedule. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential; except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. Files will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head. The Head reports on complaints annually to the Board of Governors.

The school will provide ISI/ Ofsted on request a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Information on the number of complaints logged under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available to parents or prospective parents on request from the Heads Office.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted if they believe the school has not met EYFS requirements.

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

Useful contacts

The Head - Care of: hmpa@culford.co.uk

The Governors - Care of: clerk@culford.co.uk