



Complaints Procedure for Parents

Including EYFS

Policy agreed by the Advisory Board:	November 2024
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Policy owner:	Head

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1. Introduction

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

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

- i. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where the complainant requires a way of having their concern heard, investigated and resolved.
- ii. This procedure is only applicable to complaints raised by parents of current pupils. Once a pupil has left the School the procedure is no longer applicable (unless the complaint is already under investigation at the time of leaving).
- iii. The complaints procedure need not apply to prospective pupils, and therefore, it does not cover failure to admit such pupils.
- iv. This policy is made available on the School website.
- v. Parents and prospective parents may request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year by contacting the School.
- vi. A working week or working day refers to weeks/days (Monday to Friday) when the School is in session/term time.
- vii. If a pupil has been “permanently excluded” any appeal must be conducted under the terms set out in the Exclusion Policy – the pupil is deemed to have left the School.

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 pupils.

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.

2. Parental Complaints

2.1 Stage I – Informal Resolution

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

- i. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child’s Form Tutor or in the case of Nursery pupils, their Key Person. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents’ satisfaction by this means.
- ii. If the Form Tutor/Key Person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Key Stage 3 (Pastoral) or the Head of Key Stage 3 (Academic) or the Deputy Head (Pastoral), who may in turn consult the Senior Deputy

Head. In the Prep School this would be the Head of Prep or the Nursery Manager for Early Years Nursery pupils, who may in turn consult the Head of Prep.

- iii. Complaints made directly to the Senior Deputy Head or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor/Key Person/Head of Key Stage 3 (Pastoral)/Head of Key Stage 3 (Academic)/Deputy Head (Pastoral)/Head of Prep/Nursery Manager) unless the Senior Deputy Head/Head deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- iv. 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 seven working days during term time from receipt or in the event that the 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.

2.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- i. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Stonar. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- ii. In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven working days during term time of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- iii. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. In this instance, the Head may nominate another member of the Executive Management Team or Senior School or Prep School Leadership Teams to conduct the investigation, who will then present their report to the Headmaster to make a decision on the complaint.
- iv. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- v. 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. The Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within fifteen working days in term time of the complaint being put in writing.
- vi. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure and contact the Head within ten working days in term time of being notified of the Stage 2 decision, setting out their grounds for appeal. The Head will then refer the complaint to the Chair of the Advisory Board within 3 working days in term time.
- vii. 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).

2.2 Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

- i. 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 Chair of the Advisory Board, who has been appointed by the Directors to call hearings of the Complaints

Panel. The Chair of the Advisory Board can be contacted through the Head or the Director of Finance & HR.

- ii. The Chair of the Advisory Board will reply to the parents acknowledging the complaint within five working days in term time of receipt in writing and will schedule a hearing to take place, normally within 14 working days in term time of receiving the complaint.
- iii. The Chair of the Advisory Board 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 Chair of the Advisory Board will pass particulars of the complaint to the Panel, who will meet independently of the Chair of the Advisory Board from that point.

3. 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 Head and any other relevant staff witnesses to inform them:

- i. The date, time and venue of the hearing.
- ii. The aims and objectives of the hearing and how it will be conducted.
- iii. That documentation for Panel consideration must be presented to the Clerk no later than five working days before the hearing takes place.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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.

4. Format of a Complaints Panel Hearing

4.1 The Complaints Panel Hearing format:

- i. 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.
- ii. The Complainant will be given the opportunity to explain their complaint. Following this, the Head and the Panel members may ask the complainant questions.

- iii. The Head 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 Head.
- iv. The Head and Complainant will be given the opportunity to give final statements in relation to the matter.
- v. The Chair of the meeting should bring the Hearing to a conclusion.

4.2 Following the Hearing, the procedure should be as follows:

- i. 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.
- ii. Within seven working days in term time of the Hearing, the Chair of the Panel should write to the Complainant, the Chair of the Advisory Board and, where relevant, the person complained about, setting out the Panel's findings and recommendations.
- iii. 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 Complainant.

5. EYFS

In addition to the above three stages, additional information applies to the EYFS as follows:

Complaints relating to a pupil in the Early Years Foundation Stage are required to be entered in the 'Provider Complaints Record' maintained by the Nursery Manager. The Nursery Manager is required to maintain for at least three years a record of: The date, the source of complaint, the nature of complaint (including which standard it is related to), the brief details, how it was dealt with and the actions and outcomes that resulted.

Complainants must be notified of the outcome within 28 days. Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage can make a complaint to ISI or Ofsted should they so wish. Contact details are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA: Tel: 020 7600 0100: Email – see website www.isi.net

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Telephone: 0300 1231231
Email - enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Additionally, complaints received by the Nursery Manager will be notified to the Head to be logged in the concerns file or formal complaints file maintained by the School.

6. Unreasonable Complaints

There may be some complaints where, after following the above procedure, the school may deem it reasonable to refuse any further consideration of the complaint. Unreasonable complaints as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school hinder consideration of theirs or other people's complaints. Factors which may be indicative of unreasonable conduct include:

- i. Refusing to articulate a complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance
- ii. Raising a large number of detailed but unimportant questions
- iii. Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues
- iv. Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- v. Complaints which cannot be understood, despite offers of assistance from the school
- vi. Complaints made maliciously, aggressively and/or using threats, intimidation or violence
- vii. Complaints manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of formal procedure
- viii. Complaints that are an attempt to re-open a concluded procedure.

10. Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all 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.

11. Written Records and Retention

A written record is kept of all complaints that reach the formal stage (Stage 2 above), and of whether they are resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel. A record will also be kept of what action is taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and the date on which a final outcome was reached.

All records of complaints will be kept for a minimum of seven years. Those involving safeguarding issues will be retained until the accused has reached normal pension age or for ten years from the date of the allegation if it is longer. The school will provide on request to Ofsted and ISI, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the

action that was taken as a result of each complaint. Under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding the school will record if the complaint is related to the provision for boarding.

Parents may ask the Head for the number of complaints received at the formal and panel stage during the preceding academic year. In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to either the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or, for complaints concerning boarding provision or the Early Years Foundation Stage, to Ofsted. This includes parents appealing against a decision made by the school about their complaint. Contact details are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA: Tel: 020 7600 0100: Email – see website www.isi.net

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Telephone: 03001231231
Email - enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The number of complaints registered under formal procedures in the last academic year: 4.
The School will provide ISI, 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.