

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Junior and Senior School prides itself on the quality of the pastoral care and teaching provided to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

In this Procedure, 'Parents' is used for those with parental responsibility for the child and applies to all current parents. It may also, at the School's discretion, include a parent whose child has recently left the school.

2. TIMING

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to school working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time.

Effective and fair resolution of concerns usually requires that they are brought to the School's attention promptly, which should normally be within three months of the relevant event(s). Complaints may be heard after this time if the Board of Governors and the Senior Leadership Team considers the delay has not prejudiced an effective and fair resolution.

3. PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

Where the judgement of a member of the School's staff is subject to complaint, the Board of Governors and SLT will determine whether the judgement was exercised fairly and reasonably according to the School's standards. There may be more than one fair and reasonable response to a situation and the Board of Governors and SLT will not substitute their decision for that of the staff concerned.

4. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Where legal proceedings exist between the School and the parents/student, this Procedure may be subject to the constraints of the legal process.

4.1. STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor or Subject Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a Head of Department, a Head of Year, a member of the Leadership Team or the Principal.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, a Head of Year, or a member of the Leadership team will usually be dealt with by them personally, unless they deem it more appropriate to ask the Form Tutor or Subject Teacher to respond.

If a complaint refers to a member of the Leadership team, it should be made to the Principal. If the complaint refers to the Principal it should be made to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

The person dealing with the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and

the date on which they were received.

The School will keep a written record of complaints, any action taken by the School as a result and whether they were resolved by the informal or formal stage.

Should the matter not be resolved within ten school working days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

4.2. STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal, without delay, and at most within 15 school working days of the conclusion of Stage 1 above. The parents should state in their letter that they want the matter to be dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within **five school working days**. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations and they will usually appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to act as an investigator. The investigator may request additional information from the parents and will probably wish to speak to them personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The investigator will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Principal.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing, usually within **twenty school working days** from the receipt of the complaint. The Principal will also give reasons for their decision.

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

In the event of a formal complaint about the Principal, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Governors who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In all cases, the Chair will inform parents of their decision usually within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint.

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be held securely in School.

4.3. STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

If parents are dissatisfied with the Principal's decision under Stage 2, they should put their request or a Panel Hearing in writing to the Chair of the Board of Governors within ten school working days of the decision. It is not possible to move to this stage without completing Stage 2 of the Procedure.

The Chair of the Board of Governors will convene a meeting of the Panel and they will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing as soon as is practicable.

The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school.

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 the members of the Panel no later than **five school working days** before the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the Panel Hearing by one other person who may be a relative or a friend. The Panel Hearing is not a legal proceeding and so legal representation is not necessary. If the parents do wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified they should notify the Chair of the Panel of this at least five school working days before the hearing. The parents should note that the Panel will wish to speak to them directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate.

The Panel will meet with the parents and the Principal at the same time and hear statements from both parties. There will then be an opportunity for clarification and discussion of the points raised by all parties.

The parents and the Principal will be given a written copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations within **five school working days**. The findings of the Panel will be final.

A copy will be filed in School for inspection on the premises, only by the Chair of the Board of Governor and the Principal.

The correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Ministry of Education or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them. The School will provide, upon request from the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, a written record of all formal complaints made during any specified period and the action taken as a result of each complaint.

5. RECORD OF COMPLAINTS

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School will maintain a written record of all formal complaints and of whether they were resolved by Stage 2 or progressed to a Panel Hearing. The written record will also include a record of any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints.

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