



COMPLAINTS POLICY

REVIEWED – 27th October 23
RATIFIED 1st November 23

REGULATIONS

PART 7: Manner in which complaints are handled
TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:
Allegations against Staff and whistleblowing Policy

Guidance to Parents and Carers

Background

With the introduction of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014), independent schools are required by law to adopt, make available and apply a complaints procedure in order to comply with the new standards against which OFSTED/ISI inspections will be carried out.

Both the rules of natural justice and the European Convention on Human Rights protect the right to a fair hearing and thereby underpin a modern culture that recognises a need for the open, fair and independent handling of complaints. It is also the case that the Head of School has the right to decide which pupils attend the school. They are entitled to expect the support of parents / carers at all times, even when parents believe that they have good cause to complain. If it becomes clear to the Head of School that they no longer have the support of parents / carers, or if there is evidence to suggest that a complaint is vexatious, they may instruct parents / carers to remove their child(ren).

Details of a complaints procedure (and the number of formal written complaints dealt with) are available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils.

Informal Resolution

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

It is anticipated that you will discuss any issues with your child's class teacher or their subject teacher in the first instance.

In the case of more serious concerns the following procedures are in place to ensure these are addressed as effectively and as quickly as possible:

- arrange a confidential discussion with your child's class teacher /subject teacher
- if you wish to discuss your concerns further you are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- should you need to take your concerns directly to the Head of School, a meeting can be arranged by contacting the school business manager
- should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable timescale (five school days) or in the event that a satisfactory resolution between school and home cannot be reached, parents/carers may decide to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 Formal Resolution (see below)

Formal Resolution

- Parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School. They will decide after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Head of School will meet the parents/carers concerned normally within five school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head of School to carry out further investigations.
- The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint in the form of minutes. Once they are satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing.
- The Head of School will also give reasons for their decision.
- If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Panel Hearing

- In the event that a complaint cannot be dealt with to your satisfaction, contact can be made by writing to the Proprietorial Board of Directors at the school address.
- The matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel is appointed by the Proprietorial Board of Directors and will consist of at least three persons who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel will be independent of the day to day running of the school. This will be a Director or Education. The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days.
- 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 three days prior to the hearing.
- Parents/carers may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person (a relative, teacher or friend). Legal representation is not appropriate.
- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without need for further investigation.
- When 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 seven days of the Hearing.
- The Panel will write to the parents/carers 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 Proprietorial Board of Directors and where relevant, the person complained of. It will also be available to the Head of School within the school premises.
- Parents/carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- Parents/carers may decide to contact Ofsted; if so the Ofsted helpline is 0300 123 1231, or email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted have a leaflet that gives information about how to raise concerns with a provider, how to raise concerns with them, what they can and will do when they receive the complaint and their enforcement and other powers.
- Records are kept of all formal complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at a preliminary stage, or proceeded to a panel hearing.