

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The school prides 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. Areas of bold print signify a requirement for specific compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**. If parents/guardians have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's class/subject/form teacher or the deputy head/head as appropriate to the case. If the class/subject/form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of department/deputy head/head. The matter may be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.

Complaints made directly to a head of department/deputy head/the head will usually be referred to the relevant class/subject/form teacher unless the head of department/deputy head/head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The class/subject/form teacher 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 5 working days, or in the event that the class/subject/form teacher 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.

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 head. The head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the head will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally **within 3 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The head may require relevant staff members to be present for all or part of the discussions. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the head to carry out further investigations.

The head will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and may require the attendance of a member of staff to take notes.

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 also give reasons for his/her decision.

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

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they will be referred to the Clerk to the Trustees who can call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will consist of 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 school. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the board of trustees. The Clerk to the Trustees, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 10 working 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 3 working days prior to the hearing.

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. The panel may require the attendance of a member of staff to take notes.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

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 5 working 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, the trustees and, where relevant, the person complained of.**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The board of Trustees will reinforce the implementation of this procedure by referring to it all approaches/complaints made individually or collectively.

The school is required to make available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on request details of this complaints procedure and the number of complaints dealt with, in accordance with the provision of information requirements in paragraph 6 of the Regulations.