

SECTION 3.12 – STUDENTS’ AND PARENTS’ COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Introduction

The School holds the interests of each student in the highest regard and is rightly proud of the quality of its pastoral care. However, there may be times when a student or parent may feel the need to complain about something that is causing him/her concern. This section sets out how such a complaint should be dealt with and is available to all staff, parents and students. It should be noted that the Parents’ Committee is not the appropriate forum for complaints related to individuals.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Matters concerning students in Year 6 and below will normally be brought to the attention of the school by parents. Students in Year 7 and above are encouraged to raise any issues that concern them themselves, rather than ask their parents to take these up with the School. This helps them to take responsibility for their own actions, develops their independence and is very much in keeping with the ethos of the School, which promotes mutual respect and trust between staff and students. The concern should be raised as follows:

- The student or parent should raise the concern with the subject teacher, form tutor, Head of School, or housemaster/mistress through a telephone call, email or meeting. This can usually be arranged directly by phone/email or via reception.
- If the subject teacher or form tutor cannot deal with the matter alone they may feel the need to discuss the matter with the Head of Department, one of the Head of Schools, the Deputy Head or Deputy Head (Academic), or even the Head.
- The member of staff will deal with the concern and normally respond within two working weeks.

Staff should maintain records of complaints and, where appropriate, inform the Head if the matter is likely to be raised to him.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

In the case of more serious concerns or if a student or parent is not satisfied by the response during stage 1, then the parent¹ should put the complaint in writing to the Head:

- The Head will acknowledge the letter and investigate the matter.
- If a meeting is not necessary then he will reply to the complaint normally within 5 working days.

¹ Students could make the formal complaint themselves but given that the Contract is with the parents, it is strongly recommended that formal complaints are made by parents.

- However in many cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.
- If necessary further investigation will be carried out.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings, interviews and investigations held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied, as far as is practicable, that all the facts have been established a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of the decision in writing, with reasons given. This decision will normally be made within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the parent believes that the matter has not be resolved satisfactorily, then the parent may complain in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors requesting a panel hearing. This request should be made within 7 days of the decision being notified to the parents:

- The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and schedule a hearing as soon as practically possible and normally within 10 working days.
- The Panel will consist of at least three individuals not directly involved with the complaint; two of whom will be governors and one who is independent of the management and running of the School.
- If the Panel considers it necessary, it may be required that further particulars of the complaint be supplied in advance of the hearing.
- All documents related to the case will be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This person may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. However, if necessary, they may require further information. It may also be necessary for appropriate members of staff to attend the hearing.
- After due consideration of all the facts the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which will be completed within 10 working days of receipt of all additional information and normally within 28 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.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the governors and, where relevant, the person named in the complaint.

Boarders

Boarding welfare complaints will either be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of the students. Boarders and their parents/guardians are entitled to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate should they have a complaint about a boarding welfare issue that they feel the School has not dealt with appropriately. Details of how to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate are available from the School.

Records²

A confidential written record is to be kept by the Head of all Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints, showing at what stage the complaint was resolved and recording the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). This record will be reviewed regularly by the Head or senior member of the staff and the Governors.

EYFS

In addition to the school's complaints procedure, details for contacting Ofsted and ISI are displayed in the EYFS area of the school. Parents can make a complaint to Ofsted and/or ISI should they wish.

Summary

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 33(k) of the Education (ISS) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

² Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) complaints records will be maintained for at least 3 years and the outcome of an investigation will be notified to the complainant within 28 days of having received the complaint.