

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The aim of this policy:

The school aims, to operate simple but widely known and understood procedures to ensure that complaints are considered and resolved in a timely, fair, consistent and equitable manner.

Users are defined as students, student's parent/guardian, staff and board of governors.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure that any action taken is necessary, fair and consistent, and that users are provided with adequate information concerning reasons for action and improvement sought (if appropriate).
- To clearly identify the process to be followed by the appropriate personnel in dealing with an issue.
- To indicate actions, which should be taken.
- To specify the levels of management, which have the authority to take or implement action.
- To ensure that no users will in any way be disadvantaged as a result of the complaints procedure.
- All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in all the circumstances.
- Improve communications by listening to the views of pupils, parents, staff, the local and wider community.

How a Complaint Can Be Made

A complaint can be made in the following ways:

- In person
- By telephone
- By letter

Care will be taken to

- Clarify the nature of the complaint.
- Clarify the outcomes sought.
- Check whether the person making a complaint requires support of any kind, for example with language difficulties.
- Explain the complaints procedure.

The School does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on any information received in this way.

All complaints, received, including those ultimately resolved at an informal stage, should be recorded by the School's Administration team. The outcome of the complaint shall also be recorded, together with reasons for that decision, the outcome falling into one of the following categories:

- Complaint resolved informally
- Complaint dismissed
- Complaint to be dealt with under another procedure
- Complaint upheld and the appropriate action is deemed to be one of:
 - counselling
 - training
 - general supervision
 - other management action

The Procedure

Stage One

A person with an informal complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue via the School office or the Head Teacher as soon as possible and not later than within two days of the incident. Informal complaints may be resolved quickly and simply and often do not involve detailed or lengthy investigation.

A complaint becomes formal when it is put in writing to the Head Teacher. The complaint form attached to this policy can be used or the complainant may write a letter. An acknowledgement will be sent by letter within two days. The Head Teacher and Deputy Head will investigate the circumstances thoroughly and impartially.

A written response will be issued within 10 days of the complaint being received.

It is anticipated that at all stages a written record will be kept and remain confidential to those involved.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied then parties will move on to stage two.

Stage Two

If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with either the outcome or the progress being made, then an appeal may be made, in writing, to the Governing Committee, who can be contacted via the School.

The Chair of Governors who will investigate the incident with the school governing body and respond to the complainant within five working days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the Chair of Governors will arrange for a panel hearing.

The complaints panel hearing will take place within 10 School days of the Governing Board being contacted.

The Governing Board will act impartially to ensure that all parties involved in the complaint have the opportunity to present their case to three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, bringing with them one person from outside the School who is independent of the management and running of the school.

The procedure allows for parents to attend the hearing and if they wish, they can be accompanied by one person.

If the complaint is against the Head Teacher stage two will be used by the complainant.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel will:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the School's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember :

- It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it or are related to the complainant. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

The panel will be clerked.

The panel will follow the Checklist for a Panel Hearing (in appendix).

A decision of the panel will be given in writing to the person making the complaint within 10 School days of the hearing. It will include findings and any recommendations.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be given in writing to the complainant or sent by electronic mail to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher.

The decision will also be received in writing by the proprietor, the Head Teacher and where relevant those persons involved.

The decision of the Panel Committee is final.

Records & Confidentiality

Anonymous requests will not be acted upon.

Written records of all complaints will be kept and will indicate whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

Complainants will be advised that while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow the School a fair opportunity to resolve the issue. However, correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

Aggressive or Obsessive Complaints

The School wants to deal fairly and honestly with complainants and ensure that School staff does not suffer detriment from persons making vexatious complaints. The School governing board will write to vexatious complainants to inform them that their behaviour is considered to be unacceptable. Any violent and intimidating behaviour will be reported to the police and the complainant will not be allowed to enter the school premises again without the prior permission of the School Governing Body.

Equalities Statement

The School aims to handle all complaints fairly and honestly regardless of who makes a complaint. The School treats all members of the community equitably and will not show bias to any particular individual or group.

Publicising the Procedure

The School will include reference to the procedure in the:

- School prospectus.
- Information given to new parents when their children join the School.

Conclusion

This complaints policy is a practical means by which the School can demonstrate its determination to effectively deal with complaints, in a fair and honest way, for all members of the School.

Appendix

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Chair of Governors may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Chair of Governors is then invited to explain the School's actions and be followed by the School's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Chair of Governors and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Chair of Governors is then invited to sum up the School's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

Reviewed Date Chairman Board of Governors

Head Teacher.....

[Download Complaints Form](#)