



Walhampton

Complaints Procedure

Drafted by: Bursar
Approved by: General Purpose Committee
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ISI Policy Nos.: 33A

References:

- A. Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2012
- B. Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended)
- C. National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, September 2015
- D. EYFS Statutory Framework, September 2014

Introduction

We pride ourselves on the quality of teaching and pastoral care that we provide to our pupils. In order to maintain these high standards it is important that there is a robust mechanism through which concerns can be raised. The aim of this procedure is to ensure that any complaint is dealt with efficiently and effectively at the appropriate level.

This procedure is published on the school's website and in the parents' handbook in accordance with Ref A.

The school will make available on request the number of complaints registered during the last school year in accordance with Ref B.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedures set out in this policy and during the preceding academic year is available from the Head's Office upon request.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that there will be no penalty for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with a Complaint

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3 (the Appeal Panel Hearing) will normally be completed within a further 28 days if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date the issue was raised
- Name of parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Name of pupil(s)
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential and in a secure place except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with a child's Form Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent.
- If the Form Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, Deputy Head or other member of the Senior Leadership Team.

- If the matter is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction within 7 days they may proceed to Stage 2 of this procedure

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint has not been resolved informally it may be made in writing to the Head (or directly to the Chairman of Governors if the complaint is against the Head). The Head (or Chairman) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will decide, after due consideration, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Head will speak to the parent(s) concerned, normally within 7 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 to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 parent(s) will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman or the designated investigating Governor, may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases speak to or meet with the parent(s) to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parent(s) will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for the decision.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If a complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 it may be referred in writing to the Chairman of Governors to call a hearing by a Complaints Panel.
- The Complaints Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chairman of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 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 normally not later than 5 days prior to the hearing.

- The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. The Panel should be notified of attendees at least 24 hours in advance.
- If possible the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- The Panel will write to the complainant and other interested parties informing them of its decision and/or recommendations, and any associated reasons, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The report can be made available to the complainant and where relevant the person complained about.
- A copy of the Panel's findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors, Head or other authorised persons.

EYFS Provisions

The school will provide ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action taken as a result, where the complaint relates to requirements under the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. A record of any such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.

Parents of Early Years children may also complain to ISI directly if they wish. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 email: concerns@isi.net.

There were no formal complaints, to Stage 3 under this Procedure, during the academic year 2019/20.