

Section A: Introductory Principles; Admissions; Joining UCS

A.11 Complaints

There may be occasions on which parents wish to draw to the school's attention a matter of concern regarding their son's education or happiness at school. All such complaints will be treated seriously and, as far as possible, confidentially (except in so far as is required of the school by the Education [Independent Schools Standards] Regulations of 2003). Our aim is always to resolve such issues quickly, informally and personally.

Informal resolution

It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. Where parents have a complaint, it should initially be discussed with an appropriate member of staff (normally the form-teacher or Warden). If this member of staff is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, or one of the senior teachers, or the Headmaster.

Complaints made directly to a senior teacher or to the Headmaster will normally be referred to the relevant Head of Department, form-teacher or Warden, unless the senior teacher thinks it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

Whenever a complaint is received, a written record will be kept by the teacher who receives the complaint, logging its nature and the date on which it was received. If the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved within fourteen days, then parents may choose to proceed to a formal resolution of their complaint. The procedure for this is outlined here.

Formal resolution

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, then parents should put their concern in writing to the Headmaster, who will decide the appropriate course of action. A full record will be kept of the complaint and of the action taken in respect of it. It is likely that the Headmaster will wish to meet personally with the parents in order to discuss the matter, normally within seven days of receiving the complaint. It may be that the matter can be resolved at this meeting, or the Headmaster may think it necessary to carry out further investigations. He will always keep the parents fully informed (by letter, telephone, or in person) of the ways in which the issue is being handled. When the Headmaster has reached his decision, the parents will be informed in writing, with a full account of the Headmaster's reasoning.

Resolution assisted by Council

The Headmaster may, if he chooses, pass the complaint to Council to aid the process of formal resolution. He will inform the parents if he thinks that this course of action will be helpful and appropriate. The Chairman of Council will then identify two members of Council who will receive copies of all relevant papers from the Headmaster and will meet privately with the parents to hear the complaint, and with other affected parties. The involvement of members of Council at this stage is not investigatory, but is rather to assist the Headmaster and the parents to reach agreement in the matter and to decide upon an effective process of resolution.

Independent resolution

If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision, they may pass their complaint on to the Council of UCS who will establish an appropriate Panel to consider the matter. The particular arrangements for this stage of the procedure will be communicated to parents at the time.

The Panel will normally comprise three persons, two of whom are members of the Council of UCS and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Members of the Panel will be appointed by the Council of UCS. None of the three members comprising the Panel will be directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Hearings will normally be held within 28 days of the approach to Council. The parents will be invited to attend, and have a right to be accompanied by one other person (this may be a relative, teacher or friend; legal representation will not normally be appropriate). Other relevant evidence may be heard.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the 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, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This process will normally be completed within seven days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and of the reasons for it. Any further recommendations will also be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Council of UCS and, where relevant, the person complained of. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Rights of Pupils

If a pupil wishes to raise a complaint personally, he/she should speak directly with his/her Deme Warden or, in the Lower School, with one of the Lower School Wardens, or, if he/she wishes, with the Headmaster. The matter will then proceed towards informal resolution. If it is not satisfactorily resolved in this way, the pupil's parents should follow the procedure for formal resolution outlined above.

Records of Complaints

Written records of all complaints are kept. These records indicate whether the complaints are resolved informally, formally, resolved with the assistance of Council or proceed to a panel hearing.

Records of all complaints, together with associated correspondence, statements and records, are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

Number of Formal Complaints

The number of formal complaints in the last twelve months is available on request from the Headmaster's office.

Policy Revised: 4th November 2011

Next Review: June 2011