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33a Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, there may be occasions on which a parent wishes to draw to the school's attention a matter of concern regarding their child's education or happiness at school, and seek action by the school. All such complaints will be treated seriously and, as far as possible, confidentially except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. Our aim is always to resolve such issues quickly, informally and personally.

There are three stages to the complaints procedure. Whilst all formal complaints will be made in writing, complaints will usually only progress to the Formal Stage after first being considered at the Informal Stage and only then if the parent intends to escalate the concern to the Formal Stage. The Formal Stage is not automatically triggered whenever a concern is received in writing. 'Written' in the context of this policy may be taken to include complaints made by email.

Informal Stage

It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. Where a parent has a complaint, it should initially be discussed with an appropriate member of staff (normally the Form Teacher). If this member of staff is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Key Stage, one of the Senior Management Team or Headmistress.

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. The complaint should be acknowledged within two working days and resolved within seven working days thereafter.

Formal Stage

If a parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made informally, they should then put their concern in writing to the Headmistress, who will decide the appropriate course of action. The complaint should be acknowledged within two working days and normally resolved within seven working days thereafter. A full record will be kept of the complaint and of the action taken in respect of it.

It is likely that the Headmistress will wish to meet personally with the parent 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 Headmistress may think it necessary to carry out further investigations. She will always keep the parent fully informed (by letter, telephone, or in person) of the ways in which the issue is being handled. When the Headmistress has reached her decision, the parent will be informed in writing, with a full account of the Headmistress's reasoning.

The Headmistress may, if she chooses, pass the complaint to Council to aid the process of formal resolution. She will inform the parent if she 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 Headmistress and will meet privately

with the parent 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 Headmistress and the parent to reach agreement in the matter and to decide upon an effective process of resolution.

Panel Hearing

If the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made formally, 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 comprise of at least 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 parent 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 parent, the Headmistress, the Council of UCS and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and be available for inspection on the school premises. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Records of Complaints

Written records of all complaints are kept. These records indicate whether the complaints are resolved informally, formally, or proceed to a panel hearing. For those complaints made at the Formal Stage the School records whether the complaint is resolved at that stage or proceeds to a Panel Hearing. The records detail what action is taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

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 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

The record of all complaints will be reviewed termly and a report made at each meeting of the governing body. This review is in addition to regular review of concerns at SMT meetings.

Early Years Foundation Stage

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2017, 3.74-3.75)

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI upon request.

Parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage may also contact OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and/or the ISI (Independent Schools' Inspectorate, if they wish to make a complaint.

Ofsted
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI
020 7710 9900
concerns@isi.net

This policy is made available to parents of pupils on the school website and hard copies can be made available upon request.

Number of Complaints Registered under the Formal Stage

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