



33a Complaints Procedure



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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 son or daughter'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, personally and as informally as possible.

There are three stages to the complaints procedure: Stage 1 or 'Informal Stage', Stage 2 or 'Formal Stage' and Stage 3, a 'Panel Hearing' with two members of the School Council and a person independent of the management and governance of the school.

All complaints will initially be considered at Stage 1 irrespective of whether they are made verbally, by telephone or in writing. 'Written' in the context of this policy may be taken to include complaints made by email.

Complaints will only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at Stage 1, and only then if the parent intends to escalate the concern to the Headmaster as a Stage 2 complaint. All Stage 2 complaints must be made in writing.

Stage 1 – 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 Tutor or Year/Deme Warden). If this member of staff is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with, or refer the complaint to, a more senior colleague, e.g. their Head of Department, a Warden, Head of Section, Assistant Head or Deputy Head.

Complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Management Team or Headmaster will normally be referred to the relevant Head of Department, Form Tutor or Year/Deme Warden in the first instance, 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 and the outcome. The complaint should be acknowledged within two working days and resolved within seven working days thereafter.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

If a parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made at Stage 1, they should then put their concern in writing to the Headmaster, 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 Headmaster 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 Headmaster may think it necessary to carry out further investigations. He 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 Headmaster has reached his decision, the parent will be informed in writing, with a full account of the Headmaster's reasoning.

The Headmaster may, if he chooses, refer the complaint to Council to aid the process of formal resolution. He will inform the parent 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 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 Headmaster and the parent to reach agreement in the matter and to decide upon an effective process of resolution.

Parents wishing to make a complaint against the Headmaster should do so directly to the Chairman of the UCS Council (the Chairman of Governors). The Chairman of Council will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all relevant documentation. The Chairman of Council may also call for a briefing from other members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman of Council is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of his decision, including the reasons for that decision, in writing. If parents are not satisfied with the response to their complaint the complaint should proceed to a panel hearing.

Panel Hearing

If the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made formally to the Headmaster in Stage 2, 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 governance 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 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 Year/Deme Warden 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 parent(s) 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 have been resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3. For those complaints made at Stage 2 the School records whether the complaint is resolved at that stage or proceeds to Stage 3, 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 meeting).

Number of Complaints Registered under the Formal Stage

The number of Stage 2 complaints in the last twelve months is available on request from the Headmaster's office.