



Complaints Policy

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1 Complaints procedure

The school prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedure. The School will always try to receive complaints in an open and supportive way. Wherever possible it seeks to resolve complaints, anxieties and issues in a positive manner to the satisfaction of all parties.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's form teacher, subject teacher or key person in nursery. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway. If the member of staff contacted initially cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Headmaster or Head of Nursery.

Complaints made directly to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or subject teacher unless the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.

The member of staff dealing with the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. This will be kept for at least three years. Should the matter not be resolved within three days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Headmaster will meet the parents concerned, normally within three 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Mr Wilmot, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.



The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the school proprietor. Mr Wilmot, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within seven 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 not later than two days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' 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 of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within two days of the hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person whose actions are the cause of the complaint.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The Headmaster shall keep written records of:

- all complaints reaching Stage 2 or Stage 3,
- the level at which they were resolved and
- the manner by which they were resolved.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them.

Should you require details of the number of complaints registered in a previous year, this information is available on request from the Bursar (in line with ISI guidelines)

The Children Act 1989

This Act brings together in a single coherent legislative framework the private and public law relating to children. It aims to strike a balance between the rights of a child to express his/her views, the rights of parents to exercise their responsibilities towards the child and the duty of the state to intervene where the child's welfare requires it.



The Act took effect from October 1991. Section 8 of the Act imposes a duty on those responsible for the management of Independent Schools to safeguard and promote a child's welfare. The following paragraph is extracted from the Guidance and Regulations to the Act relating to Independent Schools:

"It is important that there should be clear and accurate avenues for children to alert an appropriate adult to situations which are causing them distress..."

All pupils should understand that they have the right to make a complaint through the Headmaster. Guidelines for pupils on how to make a complaint are included in the section NOTES FOR CHILDREN: WHO CAN HELP ME WITH A PROBLEM AT SCHOOL? at the end of this document.

2 Defining a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or an individual member of staff. We do not distinguish between formal and informal complaints. An informal complaint might appear trivial but it can easily escalate and so is afforded the same attention as a more formal complaint.

3 How to make a complaint

You are able to make a complaint either personally, in writing or by phone to any member of staff. Ideally, your initial complaint will be made to your child's Form Tutor in respect of general academic and pastoral matters.

4 Who will deal with a complaint?

All members of staff are encouraged to deal with parental concerns that lie within their area of responsibility. If they are approached about a matter that lies outside their remit they will refer it to the appropriate person and inform you.

You may wish to go straight to the Headmaster with your concerns. If you do, please understand that he will not be able to respond until he has consulted the staff that can help and that he may request a colleague to respond on the School's behalf.

5 Communications with you about your complaint

We will:

- Try to ensure that the nature of your complaint is clearly understood. If it is not obvious, then we will give you time to explain.
- Take each complaint seriously and ensure that you feel your views matter.
- Endeavour to acknowledge a complaint either immediately (in the case of a verbal complaint for example) or within five working days.
- Consider the facts carefully. We will not rush into a decision. We hope you will appreciate that our response will be "considered".



- Provide a detailed response or an up-date, including an indication of when we believe we may be able to respond more fully. This will normally be not more than 21 days after the date of your complaint and certainly within 28 days.

6 Confidentiality

Any complaint will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. However, it may not be possible to investigate a complaint without identifying a member of staff or pupil so we may need to discuss this with you.

It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

7 Anonymous complaints

It is hoped that parents and the public will always feel able to complain in person. However, if an anonymous complaint is received it will be recorded in the Complaints Log. The Headmaster will decide what, if any, action should be taken as the result of such a complaint.

8 Notes for children: Who can help me with a problem at school?

Our aims are simple; we want you to be happy and enjoy your time at school.

If you are happy, school should be a place where you can work and play hard, make friends and enjoy their company and regularly meet new challenges as you grow up.

Sometimes, however, things may go wrong and even small problems can suddenly seem huge and upset you. So, to whom should you turn if you need help, advice or just a shoulder to cry on? Well, often it will be your best friend and that is fine.

But who, among the teachers and staff at school, should you approach if you want to talk about something? We hope the answer is ANYONE in School.

If something is worrying you or has upset you, please tell someone as soon as possible.

The sooner you tell someone, the sooner we can help you.



All the adults at school are here to help you and we know that you all find it easier to talk to different people. But, as a guideline, here are the various people you could approach:

- **YOUR FORM TEACHER**
You probably see more of your form teacher than any other adult at school. Their job is to look after you and make sure that you enjoy your life at school. They will understand and do everything possible to help.
- **YOUR HOUSE TUTOR**
This should be your second port of call. The House tutor knows a lot about all the pupils in your House and will be happy to listen to anything you want to talk about.
- **THE HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL**
The Head of upper school is here to look after the welfare of all children in Forms 3,4,5 and 6 and will always find time to help you.
- **THE HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL**
The Head of lower school looks after children in Reception, Form 1 and Form 2 and will always be happy to talk and offer help.
- **THE HEADMASTER**
The Headmaster watches carefully over the school to make sure it works well and that everyone is happy and making the most of everything on offer. If you want to go straight to the top, you should look no further! One of his jobs is to look after the discipline side of the school. If you are being bullied or are having problems with other children, don't be afraid to speak with the Headmaster.



- **YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER**
Your favourite teacher is probably your favourite teacher because you get on with him/her best. You may feel relaxed and at ease with him/her so why not open up and tell him/her what is worrying you?
- **PREFECTS**
The Prefect team have earned the responsibility to be Prefects and they can be trusted to help you. Sometimes it is easier to talk to another child than to an adult and they will be able to offer you advice and perhaps talk to an adult with you.

Common Questions...

What should I do if I feel I am being bullied?

You **MUST** tell someone. When other people know, others can help and this will make the bullying stop.

Tell your real friends first of all and they will support you. Tell your parents or the person who looks after you. If you are worried about telling someone at school, they can do it for you. Do not be afraid that the bully will be punished and then make things worse for you. The school wants to stop bullying as quickly as possible and will make sure that the bully knows that he/she will not get away with it. We will only take action that will help you, stop the problem and make sure it does not happen again.

REMEMBER - silence is the bully's best friend. If you do nothing about it, the problem may take a long time to go away and may get even worse.

When and where may I speak to a teacher?



Teachers are busy people but their main aim is to look after the children at school. It is not sensible to talk privately during lesson times, but choose a quiet moment, perhaps in break time or before or after school. It may be sensible to ask the teacher when it would be convenient to see him/her, explaining that you have something important to discuss. Do not be afraid...teachers are always ready to listen.

Can I talk to teachers about problems that are happening out of school?

Of course. No matter what is worrying you we are ready to listen. It is always good to share a problem and get things off your chest.

Can I contact home if I need to talk?

Certainly. If you ask, you will be allowed to use the telephone in the Headmaster's study or school office. You should use the telephone during break time or lunchtime, of course, except in emergency.

How do I make a complaint?

This is something about which you will need to speak to a teacher, perhaps the Headmaster or the teacher with whom you feel most comfortable. We hope we can sort out any complaints quickly and by simply talking, but you have the right to make a written complaint if you choose. If you decide to do this you must speak to the Headmaster who holds a special Complaints book in which you can write. The school promises to deal with any complaint within three school days.

What should I do if I don't feel I can talk to anyone at home or at school?



We hope you believe us when we say that you can talk to us about anything, but if you really need to approach someone completely different call Childline on 0800-1111.