

Parental Complaints Procedures (including EYFS)

Definition

A **complaint** is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action is regarded as a complaint and will be dealt with in line with these procedures.

Please note that **working days** refer to term time only and that complaints received in the week preceding or during the school holidays may not be dealt with as promptly due to the unavailability of staff. If a longer period is necessary to complete an investigation due to school holidays then the complainant will be informed, **within 20 working days**, of the reasons and the new date for a resolution.

Aim

The aim of these procedures is to ensure that any parent who wishes to complain can do so and that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and either informally or if necessary via a formal process. The nature of the complaint will determine the level at which the matter is to be dealt.

Availability

These procedures are available on the SIS in the student and staff handbook and can be found under Statutory Information on the school website.

Procedures

In the first instance complaints should be brought to the attention of a pupil's form tutor (or if it relates to a specific academic subject - the teacher concerned). For more serious incidents or allegations parents may directly contact members of the school's senior management team or the Headmaster at an earlier stage.

While these procedures refer to "parents", a guardian, a pupil (i.e.: any child on the school's admissions register, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage) may make a complaint.

The complaints procedures do not apply to prospective pupils or to pupils who have left the school (unless the specific complaint was raised while the child was a pupil and prior to them leaving the school). Parents wishing to appeal against exclusion (temporary or permanent) may do so using the formal part (stage 2 or stage 3) of the complaints procedure.

Informal Stage (Stage 1)

1. Any parent who has a specific complaint should bring the matter to the attention of their child's form tutor (or the subject tutor in the case of a subject specific matter). The tutor will consider the evidence, investigate and will attempt to resolve the issue informally and to the satisfaction of that parent. The tutor will record details of the complaint and the resolution on Isams. The school will respond to an informal complaint within **10 working days**.
2. If tutor receives a complaint that is of a serious nature then the tutor must refer the matter to a member of the senior management team or the Headmaster. That person will then determine who will be tasked with investigating and resolving the matter.

If a parent feels that their complaint is of a serious nature, or if following an investigation and attempted resolution, the parent feels that the issue is not resolved to their satisfaction, they may request that the complaint be resolved via the formal stage.

Formal Stage (Stage 2)

1. To make a formal complaint the parent must write (or send an e-mail) to the Headmaster clearly stating their specific grievance. Complaints should not be made directly to Governors as this may potentially compromise any subsequent investigation, hearing or appeal process.
Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
2. The Headmaster **will respond within ten working days** and will organise an investigation into the matter. Depending on the nature of the complaint the Headmaster may arrange for the investigation to be conducted by a member of teaching staff, senior manager, the Headmaster, a member of the Governing Body or an independent person appointed by the school. The Headmaster will retain oversight of the investigation and **at the conclusion of the investigation will inform the parents of his decision in writing, within 30 working days** of receipt of the complaint. If the investigation because of its nature is likely to be lengthy and exceed that time-scale the Headmaster will inform the parents in due course.

Panel Hearing (Stage 3)

If, following stage 2 a parent feels that the issue is still not resolved to their satisfaction, they may, **within 10 working days of the Headmaster's reply**:

1. Make an appeal (in writing and stating their specific grievance) to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will make arrangements for a panel hearing by a Governors sub-committee, **within 30 working days of the written appeal being received by the Chair of Governors**.
2. The panel will consist of three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will independent of the management and running of the school. According to DfE guidance the independent panel member will be a person who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinizing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments, e.g. serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force.
3. Parents may attend the panel hearing to present evidence and be accompanied if they so wish, **but this does not entitle parents to insist on legal representation at a hearing**.
4. The panel will investigate and may hear evidence from anyone associated with the matter under investigation. At the conclusion of the investigation the panel may make findings and recommendations. They will then inform the parents and all parties (including the person about whom the complaint was made) of their

decision, in writing or via e-mail, **within 20 working days** of conclusion of the hearing.

In general, panel will take one of the following courses of action:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures

The panel's decision is binding.

5. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be retained at school and made available for inspection by the Chair of the Governing Body, the Headmaster and any statutory body so authorized.

EYFS

Written complaints about **the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements** must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation **within 28 days**. The record of complaints must be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request. **If parents believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements parents may contact OFSTED by telephone on 0300 1234666.**

Arrangements for Written Record Keeping

A record of all complaints made in writing under the formal part of the procedure will be kept within the school's management information system for at least three years. Records will specify whether the matter was resolved following a formal procedure or panel hearing. The record will also specify the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint. The school will also keep a record of informal complaints to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

Confidentiality

All documentation (statements, records, correspondence, transcripts etc. related to individual complaints) are to be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Gad's Hill School will provide ISI with a written record, on request, of all complaints made during any specified period, and of the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Number of formal complaints in the academic year 2016 -17 : 2

Staff responsible: DGC

Reviewed: March 2017

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Governor responsible: Graham Noble