

COMPLAINTS BY PUPILS & STAFF

In such a small school we aim to develop an atmosphere in which the pupils can approach members of staff in the confidence that their complaint will be taken seriously. They have a right to be listened to.

There will, of course, be many general day-to-day moans by the pupils, and these will tend to be dealt with by tutors/ matrons. It is important that even relatively trivial observations are dealt with properly. Often an explanation from the member of staff, perhaps on why a particular school rule is necessary, will make the position clearer for the pupil. Some critical observations may be raised publicly during registration - an important dimension of the morning form period. Alternatively the pupil may wish to talk with their tutor (note policy on one-to-one interviews). At no stage will pupils be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

The school prefects and form representatives sitting on the School Council also have an important role to play in this regard. Complaints about catering should be brought to the attention of the year representative on the food committee.

The form tutors and resident staff are also likely to be the adults to whom pupils will go with more formal complaints. In most instances matters can be resolved at this level. The Headmaster, who is often directly consulted by pupils in the first instance (this is not discouraged), will invariably pass the issue on to the form tutor/matron unless there is good reason why this should not happen.

If the tutor/matron feels that she/he needs guidance the Headmaster should be consulted.

Any issues regarding child protection must be brought to the Headmaster's personal attention without delay by the member of staff in whom the pupil has confided (see Child Protection Policy).

If the matter is too personal to talk to any school staff about the designated off-site adults should be contacted. Dr McCormack (880328) visits school once a week and he can be seen in private. Alternatively the pupils may wish to talk in confidence to someone outside school, such as: Rev Canon David Purdy (St Stephen's Church, Robin Hood's Bay): 01947 880973, Father Neil McNicholas (English Martyrs Catholic Church, Sleights): 01947 602476 or Miss Brenda Easton (School Governor with responsibility for Child Protection): 01947 880480. Other numbers displayed in Houses include Childline (0800 1111), Ofsted (08456 404040) our School Inspectors and the NSPCC (0800 800 500).

Often the pupil will raise an issue with parents before approaching a member of staff. However, it is good practice to contact parents to inform them of developments.

Complaints directly from parents to the school are important. Consequently they are dealt with thoroughly and expeditiously using the procedure below. The tutor/matron should always inform their line manager of the complaint, even if they are dealing with the matter themselves. Copies of written complaints and replies are kept in the office files. If the complaint is dealt with by telephone a note of the conversation must always be filed. If a parent feels that their complaint has not been handled satisfactorily by the school they should contact the Chairman of Governors, via the school office. Parents and pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Boarding parents may also contact ISI and parents of pupils in EYFS may contact Ofsted whose contact details are listed below.

Procedure

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 Tutor or Matron. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Matron cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult a Head of Department or the Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Matron unless the Head of Department or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him or her to deal with it personally.
- The Form Tutor or Matron will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within seven working days or, in the event that that the Form Tutor or Matron and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the 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 with the parents concerned, normally within seven working 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 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 Chair of Trustees, who can 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. (Such a person would normally be someone of standing in the local community, who has held positions of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points.) The Trustees shall appoint each of the Panel Members. The Chairman of Trustees, 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 working 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 less 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 representations 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete normally within three working days of the Hearing. (In the case of complaints made which affect our EYFS setting, the school acknowledges that the outcome of the investigation must be notified to the complainant within 28 days.) The Panel will write to the complainant and Headmaster 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 complainant, the Headmaster, the Trustees and, where relevant, the person complained of. The school will also provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

A central register is maintained which allows for a written record to be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. This record is kept for at least three years.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of state or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

This policy applies to all parents and all pupils including EYFS. All parents and/or pupils may contact ISI (the Independent Schools Inspectorate) if they are satisfied with the outcome of the procedure outlined above:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 76000100

Parents of boarders and parents with children in EYFS also have the option of contacting Ofsted on 08456 404040 or writing to them at:

Ofsted
3rd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

There were no formal complaints made during the academic year 2010/11
There have been no formal complaints in the last 12 months.

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