



## **PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

*This policy is closely linked to the whole school complaints procedure.*

### **Introduction**

1. The School has long prided 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 this Procedure.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

2. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
3. If parents have a complaint they should contact their daughter's Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, he/she will consult The Dean of First School or Head of Junior School.

Complaints made directly to a Dean of First School or Head of Junior School will be referred to the relevant Class Teacher unless Dean of First School or Head of Junior School deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

4. The Class Teacher 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 10 days or in the event that the Class Teacher 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**

5. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress. Written complaints must be submitted to the Headmistress within one term of the parents becoming aware of the issue.

6. The Headmistress will meet/speak to the parents concerned within 3 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
5. It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations.
6. The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
7. Once the Headmistress 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 Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.
8. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

12. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Vice Chairman of Trustees, who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
13. 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 proprietor (the Board of Trustees). The Vice 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 preferably within 10 working days.
14. 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
15. 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.
16. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
17. 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 5 working 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 Principal, the Trustees and, where relevant, the person complained of.

18. 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.

19. The panel's findings and recommendations will be:

i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;

ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headmistress.

### **Bursarial Matters**

20. If parents have a complaint on bursarial matters, they can, where appropriate, raise the matter with the member of staff concerned. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should raise the matter either verbally or in writing with the Bursar. If the complaint is made verbally and is not resolved, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Bursar. The complaint, thereafter, will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 – Formal Resolution but through the Bursar. If parents are still not satisfied they should proceed to Stage 3.

### **Additional Points**

21. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. All records of complaints will be kept for at least three years. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 16A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

22. Parents with children in the Early Years setting are able to contact Ofsted if they wish to make a complaint:

**08456 014772** if you want to make a complaint or have a concern about any service Ofsted inspects or regulates (08.00 to 18.00)

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

23:

- (1) “Complaints” are not defined in the Regulations. Schools should assume therefore that any complaint merits being dealt with in accordance with the procedure.
- (2) The Regulations appear not to anticipate pupils invoking the procedure themselves except in the case of boarding schools. However, legal provisions in other areas clearly do so and therefore schools would be well-advised to prepare for pupils using the procedure as well as parents.
- (3) Below is an extract from a letter from the DfES setting out its view of who might be called upon to form part of the Panel as the “independent” member. Schools should bear in mind the need for independence to be real and should use the DfES guidance as appropriate. It is assumed that governors will, in the normal course of events, qualify for the other places on the Panel as not being directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, a prerequisite for any Panel member.

## Extract from a letter from the DfES

24. The DfES has supplied the following guidance in a letter to the ISC  
General Secretary:

(1) Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the Police Force – might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

(2) The regulations do not preclude the appointment of former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

**Approved by Trustees:**

**March 2009**

**Review date:**

**March 2010**