



WINCHESTER
COLLEGE

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Next review date: February 2020

Author: SPL

This procedure complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014.

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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available, and of the form in which it is published or available.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions (the Parent Contract) in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, details of the School's Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and in a matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of the procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and that their child will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their child raise[s] in good faith.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within seven working days.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days of the complaint being lodged and stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, within a further 28 working days.

For the purposes of this Procedure, a working day is any day within term time as published on the School's website (but not including Leave-outs). If a complaint is received shortly before or during a school holiday, the School will endeavour to deal with the complaint within the holiday period. If not practicable, it will adhere to the timeframes set out in this Procedure, viz, within 28 working days for the first two stages and within a further 28 working days for any stage 3 proceedings.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints made, and whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing, and of any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice, which can be found on the School's website. When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires access to them.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 1.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 1.2 If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Housemaster. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a relevant Head of Department, and/or the Under Master, Deputy Head Academic, Second Master or Headmaster.
- 1.3 Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Under Master, Deputy Head Academic, Second Master or Headmaster will usually be referred to the Housemaster unless the Head of Department, Under Master, Deputy Head Academic, Second Master or Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- 1.4 The Housemaster 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 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.
- 1.5 If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Warden through the Secretary to the Governing Body.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

The Headmaster may delegate responsibility at this stage to another senior member of staff (normally the Second Master or Deputy Head Academic). All references to 'Headmaster' under Stage 2 shall therefore automatically be taken to include the Second Master or Deputy Head Academic where appropriate.

- 2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, 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.
- 2.2 In most cases, the Headmaster (or his nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. Every attempt will be made to reach a resolution at this stage.
- 2.3 It may be necessary for the Headmaster (or his nominee) to carry out further investigations.
- 2.4 The Headmaster (or his nominee) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 2.5 Once the Headmaster (or his nominee) 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 (or his nominee) will also give reasons for his decision.
- 2.6 If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Warden (the Chairman of Governors). The Warden or his nominee will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Warden or his nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Warden or his nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Warden will give reasons for his decision.
- 2.7 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 3.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Secretary to the Governing Body who has been appointed by the Governing Body to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- 3.2 The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Secretary to the Governing Body, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen working days.
- 3.3 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 normally not later than seven working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.4 The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 3.5 The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 3.6 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 3.7 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- 3.8 The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within seven working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well as the Warden and the Headmaster.
- 3.9 Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions (the Parent Contract) will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmaster, that the Headmaster's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

There have been no formal complaints received in the academic year 2017-2018