



Hawkesdown House School

Endeavour • Courage • Truth

COMPLAINTS POLICY

This is a whole school policy including EYFS.

This policy is made available to parents via the school website and is also available in writing from the School office on request.

Introduction

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be treated seriously. The standard and the DFE do not distinguish between, “concerns” and “complaints”. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint and is in the scope of this procedure whatever the school labels it as. The School has the following procedure, which is for parents of all pupils including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. For parents of pupils in EYFS details for contacting ISI are given at the end of this policy and complaints with regard meeting EYFS requirements can be referred to ISI should they wish.

The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. It does not cover exclusions (see Behaviour & Discipline Policy).

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Most complaints and concerns will be acknowledged and responded to within two working days and it is hoped they will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child’s teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head / Head of Early Years / Director of Studies.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head / Head of Early Years / Director of Studies / Head may be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Deputy Head / Head of Early Years / Director of Studies / Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter directly.
- The teacher will make a note of concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within two weeks, or in the event that the School and the parents fail to reach a resolution, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic – Stage 1 meetings with parents will take place via the phone or virtually through Zoom, complying with Government guidance to maintain social distancing in school.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainants should put their complaint to the Head in writing. Although all formal complaints must 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 the matter to a formal stage. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- Written complaints about the fulfilment 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 available for ISI on request.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to and/or meet and/or write to the parents concerned, normally* within five 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will make notes of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 normally* within ten working days. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic – Stage 2 meetings with parents will take place virtually through Zoom, complying with Government guidance to maintain social distancing in school.

Stage 3 – Panel Appeal

The Department of Education gives the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member.

- Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are 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 might be considered.
- 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 School Governance. The Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within five 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.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without need for further investigation.
Should the panel make findings and recommendations, a copy of those 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 School Governance and the Head;
- 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 normally complete within 10 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 raising the complaint, the Head and, if appropriate, the person complained of.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic – Stage 3 meetings with parents will take place virtually through Zoom, complying with Government guidance to maintain social distancing in school.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

The written record of all complaints is kept and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) The record will state whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to panel hearing. The outcome of complaints made with regard to pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage will be made within 28 days of the complaint being received and the complainant will be informed. The School will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

* It is anticipated that the normal timeframe should be sufficient in term time. Should a complaint be made outside of term time, resolution may depend on the availability of relevant members of staff. Should this be the case, parents will be informed and a clear timeframe established for each particular case.

There have been no formal complaints in the academic year 2019-2020.

CONTACT DETAILS

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA