

Hampstead Hill School

Complaints Policy



Statement

Pupils, carers and parents are encouraged, through this procedure and through the pastoral structures which allow parents and pupils throughout the school (including pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage) to make contact with well-placed staff, to raise concerns or to make complaints easily and without anxiety and in the knowledge that concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, impartially and, except where disclosure is legally required, confidentially.

This procedure is available to all parents via the school's website and in the joining information and handbooks provided for parents. Parents of prospective pupils registered for entry are provided with a copy. This policy can be made available in a different language or more accessible format, if required. The School will make such reasonable adjustments as necessary to the complaints procedure to ensure it is readily accessible to those people with a disability.

Stage 1: Informal resolution

Resolution

Parents or carers should wherever possible seek an early and informal resolution of all concerns. The school will wish to take whatever measures are necessary to sort out any problems effectively before they turn a cause into a complaint; such measures will include some or all of the following: giving advice or reassurance; explaining the context to an incident or decision; gathering information from other staff or from pupils; finding information from other sources; referring the concern or potential complaint to a senior colleague; reviewing or amending practice; giving feedback to parents; apologising for mistakes or oversights.

Making contact

A parent or carer with a concern or potential complaint should normally first contact their child's form teacher. However, there may be occasions where the first contact may be with an alternative, normally more senior teacher. Other staff, for example, the Principal, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or a member of the Senior Management Team may need to be involved or consulted if this teacher cannot resolve the matter alone.

Record-keeping

Form Teachers keep a written record of concerns raised with them and the date on which they were received. In common with other correspondence from parents, details of concerns made in this way are kept on pupils' confidential files.

Time-frame

If a parent or carer (or, exceptionally, a pupil using this procedure) remains dissatisfied that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached through the school's response and within a reasonable time (five school days unless otherwise notified), then the parent is entitled to proceed with a formal written complaint in accordance with the procedure below.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints

Stage 2(i) – Formal resolution by a member of the school’s management team

If the concern or complaint has not been resolved informally the parent or carer should put it in writing, stating that a complaint is being made, addressed to either the Upper School Head or the School Coordinator, who will decide after consideration the appropriate course of action to take. At this point a formal complaint will be registered and acknowledged. Where necessary, the Upper School Head or School Coordinator will meet with the parent or carer, within ten school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter and if possible to reach a resolution at this stage. Where a complaint is received during a school holiday, it will be deemed to have reached the school on the first full school day following its arrival.

It may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Upper School head or School Coordinator will keep written records of all complaints, and of meetings held in relation to them. Once they are satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a response to the parent’s or carer’s complaint will be made and the parent will be informed in writing, within ten school days: the nature of the response will depend on the nature of the complaint but it will always give a judgement whether and to what extent, if at all, the complaint is justified, and reasons; the response may include actions which the school intends to take or a decision. A parent or carer who is not satisfied should proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2(ii) – Formal resolution by appeal to the Principal

If Stage 2(i) has not resolved the complaint satisfactorily the parent should write to the Principal within ten school days, stating why an appeal for resolution by the Principal is requested and, wherever possible, the action which the parent or carer wishes the school to take to resolve the problem. The procedure to be followed by the Principal will involve the same steps, timescale, record keeping and form of response as set out for resolution by the Upper School Head or School Coordinator in Stage 2(i). A parent or carer who is not satisfied, after receiving the Principal’s decision, should proceed to Stage 3.

A parent or carer of a pupil in the school may, for complaints of a particularly serious kind or a complaint relating to the actions or conduct of the Upper School Head or School Coordinator, may choose to address the complaint directly to the Principal.

Stage 3: Independent Resolution: Panel Hearing

If Stage 2 has not resolved a complaint satisfactorily, the parent or carer should write within ten school days to the Principal, requesting a hearing before the Complaints Panel, who will acknowledge the letter of complaint within five School days.

The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made. If then the Panel consider that the complaint is valid, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not valid, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Principal.

A Panel of three, all of whom are independent persons have not been involved in the complaint up to that point, and including at least one person of standing (usually a serving or retired Head) not connected with the management or governance of the school, will be convened to hear the complaint, within thirteen school days. The Upper School Coordinator, unless s/he is the object of

the complaint, will be present to act as clerk to the Panel. Members of the Panel will have access to all relevant documentation and will be able to ask the school and the parent or carer for any other relevant information or documentation. It is intended that the process should not be legalistic. Parents may be accompanied at this meeting by their daughter or son, if appropriate and by another person (e.g. relative, friend or a relevant specialist). If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's or carer's concern without further investigation.

Where further investigation is needed, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will give written findings in response to the complaint. The findings will depend on the nature of the complaint but the Panel will always give a judgement whether and to what extent, if at all, the complaint is justified, and the Panel's reasons. The findings may include recommendations or actions which the Panel requires the school to take. The findings of the Panel will be final. A copy of the findings will be sent to the complainant, Principal and any (where relevant) person who is the object of the complaint by electronic mail. Where electronic mail is not appropriate, a copy will be given or sent in the post.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

A record will be kept of all complaints, including a note of the stage at which the complaint was resolved. All complaints resolved at the formal stage will be recorded in the school's complaint book. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available on the school premises for inspection by the Principal that is the proprietor. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests due access to them.

A record of complaints is kept for at least three years.

Appendix 1: Further Action

Parents of pupils in the EYFS may also contact Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) or ISI (the Independent Schools' Inspectorate) to make a complaint should they wish.

Ofsted may be contacted by writing or e-mailing or ringing:

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

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

08456 014772 (8am to 6pm, Monday – Friday)

Other relevant policies

- Data Protection
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff
- Staff Appraisal and Procedure

Number of complaints registered under the formal procedure

The School will keep written records indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a Panel hearing for three years. The number of formal complaints is also available on request to parents.