



'ALIS VOLAT PROPRIIS'

SEATON HOUSE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

Date Reviewed: October 2019
Next Review Date: Autumn 2021
Reviewed by: Head & SLT

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage

General Statement of the School's Response to Complaints

The procedure explained in this document shall be available to parents of current, former and prospective pupils or to any individual who believes they have just cause for complaint against the School. The procedure will have a preliminary informal stage, but also has provision for a formal stage if the matter in question cannot be resolved informally.

Stage One: Informal Discussion

- In the first instance, the complainant should seek an informal meeting with the appropriate member of staff in order to make known their grievance and, through discussion, endeavour to arrive at a mutual understanding. This meeting should take place on the day that an issue is raised or the following day if circumstances prevent this.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form/subject teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form/subject 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 five days unless there is an exceptional circumstance, such as school holidays or in the event that the form/subject teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- The Head will meet or talk to the parents concerned, normally within two 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 keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These are securely stored either digitally or physically.
- 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. The complainant shall normally expect to receive a written response within ten days unless, because of the nature of the complaint the investigations take longer, in which case the written response will be made as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage Three of this Procedure.

Stage Three: Complaints Panel

- Should the complainant remain dissatisfied by the written response, they should put their grievance, in writing, to the Chair of Governors, enclosing copies of all previous correspondence relating to the matter, and request that a Complaints Panel be convened.
- In the event of a complaint remaining unresolved after Stages One and Two, the Chair of Governors shall convene a Complaints Panel for consideration of the matter. The Complaints Panel shall consist of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters which are the subject of the complaint. One member of the Complaints Panel must be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chairman of the Governors, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint. The Panel shall be convened to meet within 4 weeks of the Chair of Governors receiving written notice of the complaint.
- 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 seven days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant will be entitled to attend and to be accompanied by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without further investigation.
- The members of the Panel are entitled to seek additional information, statements or other evidence to assist them in determining all pertinent facts and opinions. The Panel may meet as often as is felt necessary.
- The Panel shall make known their findings and recommendations within 2 calendar months of their first meeting, unless the matter is of such complexity that this time scale is impracticable. The maximum time scale permitted shall be 6 calendar months after the first meeting of the Panel.
- The Panel shall be empowered to make findings and recommendations and shall stipulate that the complainant, the Chair of Governors, the Head and, where relevant, any persons complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations and the reasons for them by electronic mail or otherwise. A copy of the findings and

recommendations should be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and the Head.

- The findings and recommendations of the Panel shall be considered final. There is no subsequent appeals procedure.

Written Records

The Head shall keep written records of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary informal stage or whether they proceed to a panel hearing.

Confidentiality

Parents can rest assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

All correspondence, statements and records of complaints relating to individual complaints shall be kept confidential except to where the Secretary of State or a body conducts an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requires access to them.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The School shall retain records of complaints for at least three years. Written complaints about the EYFS provision must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within twenty-eight days. The records of complaints are available to ISI or DfE if necessary.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

Ground floor
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Telephone 020 7600 0100

Information by the DfE is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Reviewed October 2019

Judith Evans
Chair of Governors

Ruth Darvill
Headteacher

Appendix 1

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfES to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant.

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.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since 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.

APPENDIX 2

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (regardless of whether they are upheld) is available from the school office.