



Complaints Procedure for Parents

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This Policy sets out procedures for dealing with complaints. At Hampton Pre-Prep & Prep School (the School), we follow the same procedures as Hampton School.

This policy is for the whole School and therefore includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Kindergarten and Reception), Pre-Prep and Prep Departments.

Section 1: Sets out the Complaints Procedure and includes EYFS.

Section 2: Sets out specific EYFS requirements within this context.

Section 1

Circulation

This policy has been approved by the Governors and Headmaster of the School and is applicable to Parents. It is available on the School website and from the Hampton School Bursary and School Office.

The number of complaints registered under formal procedures during the preceding School year is available upon request.

Introduction

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 policy. Our aim is an open organisation, climate and culture.

As a School, we wish to be a community that listens and is able to respond in a positive, appropriate and sympathetic fashion when concerns are raised. This is helped where the culture of the School is open and complaints are received in a positive manner.

All concerns need to be handled seriously. An expression of concern, or a simple query, may grow into a contentious matter if it is perceived that the issue has been brushed aside. Equally, issues with the potential to become acutely difficult may be easily resolved if they are handled well at the initial stage.

“Parent(s)” mean parent(s) of current pupils or their legal guardian or educational guardian.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue (please refer to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures). Parents who wish to appeal against a decision by the School to exclude their child should proceed directly to Stage 3 of this procedure.

This policy only applies to complaints by Parents of former pupils where the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was still on the School roll.

Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. A non-exhaustive list of examples might include: dissatisfaction over some aspect of teaching or pastoral care; concern about the allocation of privileges or responsibilities, about a timetable clash or about some other aspect of the School’s systems or equipment; a billing error.

- If Parents have a complaint or concern about an educational issue (i.e. relating to the classroom, the curriculum, or provision for learning difficulties and disabilities/special educational needs) or a pastoral issue (e.g. relating to matters outside the classroom) they should initially contact their child's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the Parents' satisfaction.
- If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Deputy Head Pastoral, Deputy Head Academic, Head of Pre-Prep or the Headmaster.
- A query relating to financial matters should be submitted in writing to the Hampton School Bursar.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head Pastoral, Deputy Head Academic, Head of Pre-Prep or the Headmaster will usually be referred for further action to the Form Teacher or relevant staff unless the Deputy Head Pastoral, Deputy Head Academic, Head of Pre-Prep or the Headmaster deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The staff concerned with resolving the issue will make a written record of the complaint; this record will include the date on which the complaint was received. We will endeavour to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the School holidays. Should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding two term-time weeks) or in the event that the relevant staff and the Parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution within three working days, then Parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. Full written details of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details should be sent by the parents in an envelope addressed to the Headmaster. The Headmaster may request further particulars of the complaint from the Parent if required. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to and/or meet with the Parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within ten working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Headmaster may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and /or may involve one or more of the Hampton School Governors. If a complaint is received within two weeks before the end of the term, the complaint is likely to take longer to resolve owing to School holidays and the unavailability of personnel.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Parents will be informed of the decision normally within 20 working days of the formal complaint being made. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If Parents are still not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- If the complaint concerns the Headmaster, then it should be directed to the Chair of Governors who will appoint another School Governor to oversee the procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If the Parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach formal resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors' Pre-Prep & Prep Committee (the Clerk). Requests will normally only be considered if parents have completed Stages 1 to 2 and make their request in writing to the Clerk within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 decision. The Parents must

state in their letter grounds for complaint and the outcome desired. The Parents must also send a list of any documents they believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see, along with any documents in their own possession which relate to the matters set out in their complaint and which they wish the Panel to see. The Clerk will usually acknowledge the Parents' request in writing within five working days and will call a Panel Hearing on behalf of the Chair of Governors. A Panel Hearing will be called as soon as reasonably practicable, normally within 28 working days of receiving the complaint. The Panel will not normally sit during School holidays.

- The Panel will not consider any new area of complaint that has not been raised previously in Stage 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure with the exception of an appeal by Parents against the School's decision to exclude their child.
- The matter will then be referred to the Chair of Governors' Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint, from either the complainant or the School, or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 10 working days prior to the hearing.
- One other person may accompany the Parent(s) to the Hearing; this may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is neither necessary nor appropriate. A colleague may accompany the Headmaster to the Hearing.
- The School will make reasonable arrangements to facilitate the Parent(s)' right to attend the Panel Hearing. However, if this right is not exercised, the School will continue with the Panel Hearing in line with this policy.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the Parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. If the Panel decides that further investigation is necessary, the Hearing may be adjourned.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the Hearing or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- Within 10 working days of reaching a decision, The Chair of the Panel will write to the Parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the Parents, the Headmaster, the Chair of the Governors and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made. The decision of the Panel will be final and is not subject to any further right of appeal.

Confidentiality and Records

- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Education Act, as amended, requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- Written records will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage (Stages 1 and 2) or proceed to Panel Hearing (Stage 3). Action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded. The Headmaster and the School Governors will make a copy of these records available for inspection on the School premises. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure in the preceding school year, as required by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, is available from the School on request.

Vexatious Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

Section 2: Early Years Foundation Stage

EYFS principle: Unique Child – Keeping Safe & Positive Relationships – Partnership with Parents

Outcome: Stay Safe & Enjoying and Achieving

This is a summary of our procedure, with particular reference to the EYFS – please refer to Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2017 for further information. There is a legal requirement to investigate a complaint regarding the EYFS requirements when it has been made by a Parent in writing or electronically. We must notify the complainant within 28 days of the outcome of the complaint of any investigation and subsequent actions taken. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted/ISI on request.

We encourage Parents to share their concerns regarding the running of the EYFS setting and suggestions for improvement as early as possible in order to avoid a subsequent complaint. We firmly believe that working in partnership with parents and establishing good relationships with them when their child first starts can help to prevent formal complaints being made. To this end, we hold a Curriculum Information Evening early on in the academic year, which allows an opportunity to share important policies and procedures with parents. We also make Parents aware of the complaints procedure in our 'Welcome Booklet' and urge them to use it in order to try and minimise concerns escalating before they are resolved.

Naturally, we hope that we are able to resolve all concerns that are raised, however, Parents can make a complaint to Ofsted should they wish, and we have a duty to make contact details for Ofsted available to parents:

The address for Ofsted is as follows:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD;
general helpline 0300 123 1231;
textphone number 0161 618 8524.

These contact details are displayed on our Safeguarding Children Noticeboard. Complaints should be made in writing to the Complaints Manager (including e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

Our aims are as follows:

- To set out the procedures to be used for making a complaint, either verbally or in writing;
- To establish the procedures to be followed when dealing with a complaint;
- To set out the procedures to be used when a complaint has been made directly to Ofsted.

Complaints procedure

1. All concerns and complaints will be dealt with courteously, respectfully and promptly.
2. Confidentiality of those concerned in the complaint (adults and children) will be maintained, with only those who 'need to know' being aware of their identity.

3. Parents will be given a clear procedure as to how to complain, please refer to Section 1: Complaints Procedure for Parents for greater details.
4. Written complaints must be investigated and the outcome reported back to the complainant within 28 days. Verbal complaints will also be considered and resolved promptly to reach a satisfactory outcome for both the complainant and the School.
5. Any complaint that has been sent to Ofsted will be dealt with accordingly within the time-frame set by Ofsted and written records will be kept of all investigations and outcomes. Where required the School will agree the appropriate course of action with Ofsted.
6. Written records of complaints must include the following:
 - The date of the complaint and how it was made – verbal, by telephone, written, by e-mail or direct to Ofsted.
 - All details of what the complaint was about ensuring that individual names are not included – for example, ‘child A’, ‘staff B’ etc. in accordance with Data Protection legislation.
 - Who made the complaint – a parent, member of staff, Ofsted, anonymous, or another organisation (give details). Do not name the parent or anyone (adult or child) related to the complaint as others will share the record and so details should remain confidential.
 - The EYFS requirement to which it relates.
 - How the complaint was dealt with and by whom – for example, internally, an investigation by Ofsted, or an investigation by other agencies (stating which agency). Give details of the investigation if carried out internally or attach a copy of any letter from Ofsted regarding the investigation or from another agency.
 - Any actions proposed or taken as a result of the investigation of the complaint. This should include internal actions taken, actions agreed with Ofsted, changes to conditions of registration as a result of the investigation or other action taken or set by Ofsted or another agency (where we have permission to do so). If no action is taken this should also be recorded.
 - Whether the record has been shared with the complainant and when (this should be within 28 days of the written complaint being made).
 - This must be signed and dated by the staff member who completed the record.

Confidentiality

All staff are aware of the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality. Staff should refer to the **Guidelines for Staff on Dealing with Complaints by Parents**.

Records

Records kept will be as described in Section 1 and these will be kept for three years. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.