

## Complaints Procedure for Parents

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## Circulation

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

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

## Introduction

Hampton School (the School) has a longstanding reputation for the excellent quality of 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)" means 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 son's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter can be resolved straightaway by this means to the Parents' satisfaction.
- If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone or the complaint relates to the Form Tutor, it may be necessary to consult the relevant Head of Department, Head of Year, or one of the Deputy Heads.
- A complaint relating to financial matters should be submitted in writing to the Bursar.
- Complaints made directly to one of the Deputy Heads or to The Headmaster will usually be referred for further action to the Form Tutor, Head of Department or Head of Year, unless a Deputy Head or The Headmaster deems it appropriate for an alternative member of staff to deal with the matter.
- The member of 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. The School

will endeavour to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, 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 Parents if required. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases and where possible, The Headmaster will speak to and/or meet with the Parents concerned to discuss the matter within 10 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 appoint a member of the senior leadership team to act as investigator and/or may involve an independent third party and/or one or more of the 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 usually be informed of The Headmaster's decision within 20 working days of the formal complaint being made. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the Parents are not satisfied with The Headmaster's decision, they may choose to 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 a formal resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors (the Clerk). Requests will normally only be considered if the Parents have completed Stages 1 and 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 all 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 area of complaint that has not been raised previously in Stages 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 the Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three people not involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and the day-to-day 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 Panel Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties no later than 10 working days prior to the Panel Hearing.
- One other person may accompany the Parent(s) to the Panel Hearing; this may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is neither necessary nor appropriate. A colleague may accompany The Headmaster to the Panel Hearing where the complaint is against The Headmaster.
- 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 Panel Hearing may be adjourned.
- 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 usually complete within 10 working days of the Panel Hearing or as soon as reasonably 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 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.

### **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.

### **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 stages (Stage 1 and 2) or proceeded to a 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 School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, is available from the Bursar on request.