

## **SES Complaints Procedures**

### **Rationale**

Even in the best run institutions, concerns and misunderstandings will occur. And mistakes will be made. It is important that mechanisms exist for parents or staff to voice their concerns and grievances, and that these concerns be addressed promptly and dispassionately.

The school promotes a culture of openness where parents have a right to have their views heard. The school regards such contact and engagement in a positive light and encourages direct communication with the school where there is a concern or a complaint.

The school insists on respectful discourse, and any disagreements between the school and staff or the school and parents, are expected to be dealt with objectively, professionally and calmly, however upset or angry a complainant may be.

Anonymous complaints, whether against a member of staff or management, cannot be entertained by the school.

A complaint may be found to be unsubstantiated or unwarranted; in this case the complainant has a right to be informed of this, and of the investigation or process that has taken place.

Where a complaint has been found to have substance, it may be appropriate to:

- offer an apology – which may come from the school or an individual
- an explanation as to why the concern / complaint / misunderstanding occurred
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur, and that steps have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

A complaint involving a member of staff may lead to disciplinary measures, a letter of warning etc. It would not be appropriate for details of such disciplinary measure to be passed to a complainant or parent. Sometimes parents or other complainants will be informed that action has been taken by the school, and will be expected to accept that such is the case; but the school will observe staff confidentiality in all such cases.

## **Parental Complaints**

It is important that parents are directed to the appropriate person when making a complaint (by reception, admin, other staff etc.) – it should not always be assumed that complaints go directly to the Principal or members of the Senior Management Team.

### **Stage 1**

Normal minor concerns about homework, routine issues to do with uniform, friendship issues etc. should be directed to the tutor or class-teacher and can normally be dealt with informally.

There is an expectation that the member of staff dealing with a concern get back to a parent within 24 hours of a complaint or concern, even if just to acknowledge it and indicate that the issue is being followed up.

Any issue likely to be referred beyond the tutor or class-teacher, should be subject to a written note / email so that records can be kept and accessed where necessary.

Minor concerns about teaching can be addressed by the HoD initially – in the interests of transparency, any teacher who is subject to a parental complaint, should be informed of this by the HoD or SLT.

It is important that any member of staff communicating with a parent about a concern, listens openly to the concerns being expressed – contentious issues need to be depersonalised and discussed dispassionately.

Many complaints can be addressed and sorted out quite informally, but the strategy needs to be either a) reach a solution or b) refer the issue on to someone higher.

All complaints in this category should be resolved within 2 to 5 working days.

### **Stage 2**

If minor concerns are not addressed to the satisfaction of parents, they may go to the Head of Primary / Secondary as appropriate; all approaches to section Heads should be preceded by an attempt to resolve the issue lower down.

A written record needs to be maintained of complaints at this level – ideally the complainant should also submit a written report or outline of the concern, before the issue is addressed by the Head.

Complaints that have reached this stage should be reported to the Principal, and resolution may involve the Principal being involved.

Any complaint not resolved or remedied at the level of Head or Principal, can be referred by a parent to the Board of Governors.

A complaint or concern at this stage should normally be resolved within 5 working days.

### **Stage 3**

Any complaint to the Board of Governors will be addressed only after all other avenues have been exhausted and have proven unsuccessful.

A complaint to the Board must be in writing, addressed either to the parent governor or to the chairman of the Board. (The email addresses of the chairman and parent governor are on the school website.)

The Principal must be informed in advance of any such issues which will be raised at a Board meeting.

The Board may discuss or resolve any such issues at their monthly meeting, with a written response being provided to the complainant.

The Board may assign members of the Board, usually two selected Governors, to investigate or follow-up a complaint where a resolution is not found, or where further information may be needed.

When a complaint is assigned to selected Governors to follow-up, they will report back to the Board as a whole, either at the next meeting or in writing, and the Board will make a final deliberation.

A complainant who is unhappy with a Board decision, may appeal to the chairman in writing, requesting that he reconsider the matter.

The chairman may seek to meet with parents or complainants before a decision on an appeal is made, followed by the chairman reporting back to the whole Board.

Once a decision has been considered by the Board and appealed to the chairman, the school's process for complaints is exhausted.

A complaint to the Board of Governors will usually be resolved at the following monthly meeting of the Board, and thus may take up to a month to resolve fully.

### **Complaints regarding the Principal**

Complaints regarding the Principal, from parents or staff, shall be addressed to the Principal in the first case, either in person or in writing.

All complaints about the Principal shall be recorded and brought to the attention of the Board of Governors by the Principal at the earliest possible opportunity, and at the latest during the following monthly board meeting.

Staff or parents who have failed to get resolution or failed to get a response from the Principal, may go to the Board through the parent governor or the staff representatives.

The Board of Governors are responsible for overseeing and evaluating the Principal's performance on an annual basis, and for dealing with competency issues or complaints that arise.

The Board of Governors are the final arbiters on any unresolved complaint relating to the Principal.

### **Staff Complaints**

Under our duty of care, it may be possible that staff have serious concerns about child safety or the actions of another member of staff in relation to children – all such concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal. If a serious concern involving child safety is made known to the Principal, he is obliged to address the issues within 24 hours – this may involve the suspension of a member of staff until an investigation is concluded.

The Principal understands that some complaints and concerns might be made by staff requiring anonymity – such requests for anonymity will be respected.

Minor complaints regarding other members of staff should be addressed to the individual's line-manager (HoD / KS Head or Head).

Concerns / complaints should be delivered or reported professionally and objectively.

All discourse between staff, especially that involving conflict or attempts to resolve conflict, must be conducted respectfully and unemotionally.

If resolution is not achieved, matters should be referred to the Principal.

Any interviews conducted by the Principal involving a possibility of disciplinary action, dismissal etc. may take place in the presence of the staff representatives or other person nominated by the member of staff, if the member of staff involved so wishes.

The Principal is the final arbiter in disputes between members of staff, though staff may appeal to the Board of Governors if they disagree with an outcome.

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