



## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

Colfe's 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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Colfe's School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils on the School's website, parent portal and in the School office during the school day, and Colfe's School will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents, for whom a separate complaints procedure applies - it may only be used by parents of current pupils or recent leavers as defined as pupils who have left the school in the past 6 months.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Colfe's School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

This procedure does not apply for appeals against Permanent Exclusion, the process for which is detailed in the Permanent Exclusions & Required Removals policy.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

### **The three-stage Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage I – Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's key worker / form teacher / Head of Year / Head of House (or Department) (the 'first point of contact'). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the first point of contact cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a more senior member of staff.
- Complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Management Team or Head will usually be referred to the relevant key worker / form teacher / Head of Year / Head of House (or Department)



unless the member of the Senior Management Team or Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

- The first point of contact 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 seven working days or in the event that the first point of contact and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

### **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 Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If appropriate the Head may delegate the complaint to the Junior School Head, Deputy Head or Bursar (the 'delegate') to resolve if they have not already been involved.
- In most cases, the Head or his delegate will try and meet the parents concerned, within seven working 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 or his delegate to carry out further investigations.
- The Head or his delegate will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. In addition, details of the complaint will be recorded in the complaint or concern log.
- Once the Head or his delegate 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 Head or his delegate will also give reasons for their decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Bursar and Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. If the complaint is against the Bursar then the Chairman of Governors will appoint a suitable Convenor who has not previously been involved with the complaint.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. If the Chairman of governors has been involved in the earlier stages of the complaint process it may not be appropriate for them to sit on the panel.



- The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 15 working days.
- 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 five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. 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 make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
  - Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
  - may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within five working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The School's target is to acknowledge a complaint within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The School aims to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days, and aims to complete Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, within a further 20 working days although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. During School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint of an unusually complex nature or during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay



### **Persistent correspondence**

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 procedure.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage (stage 1), the formal stage (stage 2), or proceed to a panel hearing (stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). Many low level concerns are dealt with by form tutors and subject teachers on a daily basis without coming into the scope of phase 1 and being recorded on our Complaints log, although concerns which senior leaders consider to be serious in nature or relevant to the regulatory framework are not omitted even if resolved immediately and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Colfe's School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:



Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

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