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Parental Complaints Policy

2023-2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the process for handling complaints from parents of pupils. It does not apply to prospective pupils and only applies to former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School. There is a separate procedure for parents of pupils who are excluded from School (Exclusion, Removal and Review Policy).
- 1.2 A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School.
- 1.3 It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. The timescale for acknowledging, considering, and resolving complaints is set out in working days which means term time only. The School will strive to deal with complaints during holiday periods but whether this is possible will depend on the nature of the complaint and to whom it is made.
- 1.4 All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.

2. Stage One - Informal Resolution

- 2.1 If parents have a concern or a complaint, they should normally first contact their child's Form Teacher. The Form Teacher or other member of staff as appropriate may be able to resolve the concern directly. This may involve consultation with a subject teacher, Head of Department or Senior Deputy Head (Academic) if it is an academic concern. They may need to pass the parent on to one of the Deputy Heads if it is a concern about pastoral provision. Similarly, if the complaint is neither academic nor pastoral in nature, then the complaint may be passed to the Group Bursar (or their nominee, dependent on the nature of the complaint). The Head may be involved in informal resolution of concerns if this is felt appropriate depending on the seriousness or urgency of the concern in question.
- 2.2 Should the matter not be resolved within seven working days or in the event that the parent is not satisfied with the response then the parent should proceed to stage two of this procedure. If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, c/o the Clerk to the Governors.

3. Stage Two - Formal Resolution

- If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then parents should set it out in writing to the Head. After considering the complaint the Head will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and decide the appropriate course of action to take. If necessary further investigation of the complaint may be required (e.g. where there may be other parties involved) and if appropriate there will be a meeting with the parents, to discuss the matter and seek a resolution at this stage.
- 3.2 Once, so far as reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parents will be informed in writing and reasons for the decision given.

- 3.3 If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair 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 Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed in writing and the reasons for the decision given.
- 3.4 EYFS complaints - 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 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. Sherborne Prep 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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice.
- 3.4 The School will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and will advise parents of the decision within 14 working days of receiving the complaint in writing under paragraph 3.1. In the event that it is not possible for the School to complete its investigation or establish all the facts and so cannot make a decision within this period then parents will be advised as to why this is the case and informed of the revised timescale.
- 3.5 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

4. Stage Three - Panel Hearing

- 4.1 If the parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint arising from the former two stages, parents should write to:
Clerk to the Governors
Sherborne School
Abbey Road
Sherborne
Dorset
DT9 3LF
- In the event that the complaint is against the Group Bursar who is also the Clerk to the Governors, parents should write to the Headmaster and CEO of Sherborne School. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within five working days.
- 4.2 A Panel consisting of at least two Governors and one person who shall be independent of the management and running of the School will be convened to hear the complaint. All three members of the Panel will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- 4.3 The Clerk to the Governors will schedule a hearing with the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 working days of receipt of the complaint under paragraph 4.1.

4.4 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.

4.5 Parents may be accompanied to this meeting by their child if appropriate, and one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

4.6 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' concern immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation and advise the parents of the timescale for completing this further investigation. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings 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 Panel Hearing or in accordance with the revised timescale if further investigation is required. At the same time, a copy of the Panel's findings and any recommendations will be given to the Head and where relevant the person complained about and will be made available for inspection at the School by the Governors and the Head. The decision of the Panel will be final in that there will be no further right to appeal or further hearing within the School's procedure.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 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.

6. Recording Complaints and use of personal data

6.1 Following resolution of a complaint made under Stage Two, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the Formal Stage or proceed to a panel hearing and actions taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

6.2 The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints (including any panel member appointed under Stage Three process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision.

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the school's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaint Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Records Retention Policy but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

Parents are entitled to provision of information. Information that is provided is sent via e-letters to parents and hard copies will be made available on request. Information is also made available on the school website. The school received no formal complaints in the academic year 2021-2022.

Parents can request information by contacting Annie Gent- Head:
annie.gent@sherborneprep.org or through the Chair of Governors via the Group Bursar, David Cole: bursar@sherborne.org

7. ISI / DfE / OFSTED

- 7.1 Parents can seek advice from or take their complaint in writing to ISI (Independent Schools' Inspectorate) if they are not satisfied with the School's own process:
ISI, First Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA to concerns@isi.net
- 7.2 You can also contact the registration authority DfE (Department for Education) online or by telephone on the public enquiries number (0370 000 2288).
- 7.3 You can contact OFSTED via email or through their complaints page via this link: [Contact us | Ofsted](#)

Group Bursar
September
2023