

HIGHCLARE SCHOOL

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS / GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

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 Procedure. Our policy is to resolve disputes informally and with a minimum of disruption if at all possible. The procedure for coming to an informal resolution of a complaint is set out below. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, then a more formal complaints procedure exists which is also set out below.

Procedures

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns and complaints informally with the relevant Form Teachers. The Form Teacher will aim to resolve any problems to parents' satisfaction as swiftly as possible and within 48 hours. In the Senior School (KS3 upwards), if the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone within this time frame, it may be necessary for him / her to consult the Academic or Pastoral Head who will usually contact parents about the complaint within 48 hours of it being referred to them with the aim of finding a resolution. In KS1 and 2, matters which cannot be resolved by the Form Teacher will be referred to the appropriate Site Head who will contact parents about the complaint within 48 hours of it being referred to them with the aim of finding a resolution.
- In the Senior School (KS3 upwards), a complaint may be reported directly to the Academic or Pastoral Head, who will contact parents about the complaint within 3 working days hours of the complaint being made with the aim of finding a resolution.
- In KS1 and 2, a complaint may be reported directly to Site Heads who will contact parents about the complaint within 48 hours of the complaint being made with the aim of finding a resolution
- A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be kept. Records of all complaints are kept for at least three years. Should the matter not be resolved within the above time frame or in the event that parents feel that an informal resolution is not possible, they 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 Head, which is then deemed a formal complaint. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Headmistress will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 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 Headmistress to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaints.
- Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing as soon as possible and in any case within 28 days of having received the complaint. The Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Formal Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of the Governing Body, who can then call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

- 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, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take places as soon as practicable and normally within 10 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 2 two days prior to the hearing.

- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and reasons of it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmistress, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as it is required of the school by paragraph 7(k) of the DCSF Education Regulations 2009 (Independent Schools Standards), where the Secretary of State or a body conducting all inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

No party may commence any court proceedings in relation to any dispute or complaint arising out of the school contract until the School's internal procedures have been exhausted and, thereafter, they have attempted to resolve it in good faith by means of mediation in accordance with the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) Model Mediation Procedure, or such other accredited mediator as the parties shall agree. This procedure may be amended to take into account the relevant provisions of the school contract or any other agreement which the parties may enter into in relation to the conduct of the mediation.

To initiate mediation, the School by its Headmistress or the Parents must give notice in writing ("ADR Notice") to the other party requesting mediation in accordance with the above. A copy of the request should be sent to CEDR Solve at Exchange Tower, 1 Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GB (CEDR Solve).

If there is any point on the conduct of the mediation (including the nomination of the mediator) upon which the parties cannot agree within 14 working days from the date of the ADR Notice, CEDR Solve will, at the request of any party, decide that point for the parties, having consulted with them. The mediation will start no later than 21 working days after the date of the ADR notice. Neither party may terminate the mediation until each party has made its opening presentation and the mediator has met with each party separately for at least one hour.

Appeals against Internal Assessment of Work for External Qualifications

Highclare School is committed to ensuring that whenever its staff assesses students' work for external qualification; this is done fairly, consistently and in accordance with the specification for the qualification concerned. Assessments should be conducted by staff who have appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills, and who have been trained in this activity. Students' work should be produced and authenticated according to the requirements of the examination board. Where a set of work is divided between staff, consistency should be assured by internal moderation and standardisation.

If a student feels that this may not have happened in relation to his/her work, he/she may make use of the school's appeals procedure. Note that appeals may only be made against the process that led to the assessment and not against the mark or grade. Copies of this procedure are available from the Examination Secretary.

For Early Years Foundation Stage, TOPS and Holiday Care Scheme – For TOPS and Holiday Scheme, parents may follow the School's internal complaints procedure. The first point of contact is the TOPS and Holiday Care Manager. Parents may also make a direct complaint to Ofsted or ISI. Complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of the school having receipt of the complaint. In the event of any complaint not being resolved, please contact Ofsted Early Years. The details for contacting Ofsted and ISI are as follows:

Ofsted

The National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
Or your local Childcare Information Bureau
(0121 303 6754)

Independent Schools Inspectorate

1st Floor CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100
Fax: 020 7776 8849

The school will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of these complaints is kept for at least three years.

Written by:	Adopted by the Board:	Review Date:
MV/September 2009	November 2009	July 2012