



## **PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURE**

This policy applies to all sections of the school including EYFS, TOPS and Holiday Care Groups. The complaints process is only available to parents of current registered pupils. The procedure is not available to parents of former pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The procedure also does not apply to parents of prospective pupils.

If parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated sensitively 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. For the purposes of this policy, the School does not draw a distinction between a concern and a complaint. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is regarded as a complaint, which will be dealt with appropriately.

We ask our staff to be aware of:

- the importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints.
- the importance of treating complaints respectfully.

### **Scope of the Policy**

The aim of the Policy and associated procedure is to produce a resolution that everyone involved can accept. The procedure should be used as a mechanism for resolving issues in good faith and in a courteous manner.

It should not be used:

- To delay or avoid payment of any sum (including fees or fees in lieu) due under the School's parent contract agreed to by parents upon enrolment of their child at the School (the "Parent Contract").
- Where the complaint is against the decision of an external agency or third party such as an examination board or higher education institution (in such cases, parents will be advised on the appropriate route for their complaint and, where possible, given information and advice about how to progress their complaint).
- In an abusive or threatening manner or in a way that is vexatious.
- To request financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds.

### **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 / Class Teachers in the first instance**. The Form / Class Teacher will aim to resolve any problems to parents' satisfaction as swiftly as possible and normally within 2 working days. A 'working day' is defined as a day in term time, when the School is in session. We should aim to update the complainant at least once in 1 working day period.
- If a Form / Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone within this time frame, it may be necessary for him / her to consult the **Key Stage Co-ordinator** who will contact parents about the complaint normally within 1 working day of it being referred to them with the aim of finding a resolution.
- If the Key Stage Co-ordinator cannot resolve the matter within the time frame, he / she will refer the matter to the appropriate senior manager who will contact parents about the complaint normally within 1 working day of it being referred to them with the aim of finding a resolution.
- A complaint may be reported directly to the senior manager who will contact parents about the complaint within 1 working day of the complaint being made with the aim of finding a resolution
- 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**

- 2a** If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Highclare School, which is then deemed a formal complaint. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
  - The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaints.
  - Once the Head 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 normally within 28 working days of having received the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for this decision.
  - If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- 2b** The complaint may be referred by the parents to the Chair of Governors for resolution. If the parents have not made a formal complaint to the Head (Stage 2a above) the Chair will direct the complaint to the Head for resolution. If Stage 2a has been completed then the Chair may choose to review the decision. If a resolution is reached prior to the necessity to convene a Complaints Panel, this will be recorded as a Stage 2 complaint. The Chair of Governors will liaise with the Head and review the documentation and course of action taken by the Head during the 2a process.
- Once the Chair 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 normally within 28 working days of having received the complaint. The Chair will also give reasons for this 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 will 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 place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days. In the case of a complaint relating to a pupil exclusion, the School will do all that it reasonably can to speed up the process.
- 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 5 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. This does not confer a right to have a legal representative present.
- 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 for it within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail, or otherwise given in writing to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained of. These findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

At the conclusion of the final stage of the complaints procedure the School will provide information about alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Details of this can be found in appendix 1 of this policy.

A dated, written record of all complaints received by the school and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or proceeded to a panel hearing will be kept centrally and regularly examined by the Head and SLT. The written record will also detail any action taken by the School as a result of the complaints, regardless of whether the complaints were upheld.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

In addition to the complaints procedure, the number of complaints registered under our formal procedure during the preceding school year can also be made available to parents and prospective parents upon request of the Head.

For the academic year 2023-2024 the School received two stage two complaints and no stage three complaints.

### **For Early Years Foundation Stage, TOPS and Holiday Care Scheme**

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.

**Highclare 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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Storage and Retention of Records Policy.**

**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](#)

### **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; that 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.

This policy will be monitored, reviewed and updated where necessary at least every three years, always in line with regulatory requirements. It will be presented to Governors for their consideration and approval.

Written by:	Adopted by the Board:	Review Cycle	Most Recent Review
MV/September 2009	September 2013	3 yearly	April 2025

## **Appendix 1: Mediation**

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 Head 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.