



ABINGDON

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

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.

In line with National Minimum Standard 5 for boarding schools this procedure is also available for boarders and staff. For all pupils a simplified procedure is also available, entitled “Complaints Procedure (pupils)”, which is available on the website under Policies. Guidance is given to boarders in the Boarding Handbook.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son’s Housemaster. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the Housemaster cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult others, such as a head of department, the Second Master, the Bursar or the Head.
3. Complaints made directly to a head of department, Second Master, or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster unless the head of department, the Second Master or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Housemaster 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 ten School working days, or in the event that the Housemaster 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 Procedure. For serious complaints written records of the complaint and outcomes will be sent by the Housemaster for review by the Head.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

1. 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.
2. In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

5. Once the Head 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 after a further 7 school working days. The Head will also give reasons for her decision.
6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Resolution by Chairman of Governors

1. If the Head cannot resolve the complaint, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Chairman of Governors. In most cases the Chairman of Governors will meet or speak with both parents concerned and the Head within ten School working days and once, as far as is practical, all the relevant facts have been considered, will make a decision of which the parents will be informed about in writing. The Chairman will also give reasons for his decision.
2. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 4 of this Procedure.

Stage 4 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 4 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a Governor, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
2. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governors who will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 17 School working days.
3. 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.
4. One other person may accompany the parents to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
6. 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 14 School working days of the Hearing. The panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of the findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

Written records will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

Complaints regarding boarding welfare may be made to Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100.

Pupils' complaints are considered seriously, and where they cannot be resolved to the pupil's satisfaction, an appropriate outcome will be reached which balances the rights and duties of pupils.

Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Second Master – May 2012