

Notting Hill Preparatory School

Policy for

Complaints

(EYFS & KS1-3)

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Notting Hill Preparatory school prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be dealt with by the school in accordance with this procedure, which is available on request to the parents of pupils and prospective pupils at the school.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should contact their son/daughter's form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the head.
- Complaints made directly to the head will usually be referred to the relevant teacher if appropriate, or dealt with by the head who will attempt to resolve the matter in five days or as soon as is practicable.
- For matters of a more serious or sensitive nature parents may wish to contact the head in the first instance.
- The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints and concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within five days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents 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 will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the head, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.
- In most cases, the head will speak to the parents concerned within forty-eight hours 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. These will be completed in seven days or as soon as is practicable.
- The head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the head is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The head will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the head will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he/she is unable to issue his/her decision and informing the parents when he/she will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint in any event.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing:

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to involve Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the head informing him/her of their decision to do so within 28 days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the chairman of governors/proprietor (see Appendix 1).
- The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.
- If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- 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 parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within fourteen days of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the head, chairman of governors/proprietor and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.
- Provision will be made for a written record to be kept of all complaints and of whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to the panel hearing stage.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) j of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003; by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families; or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevail..

Further, in compliance with the EYFS Statutory Framework:

- If parents remain dissatisfied with the findings of the panel or if they are dissatisfied with the school's EYFS provision, they can take their complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).
- A record of any complaint in respect of the EYFS will be kept for at least 3 years.

For a complaint concerning exclusion, see our **Policy for Exclusion**.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR STAFF

The Head feels very strongly that the happiness and well-being of the staff are essential factors in maintaining a harmonious and nurturing environment for the children, and it is therefore of paramount importance to resolve as quickly as possible any cause for complaint by a member of staff.

Should a member of staff have a cause for complaint, the following procedure should come into operation:

Stage 1

- If a member of staff has a cause for complaint he/she should in the first instance consult his/her Year leader or KS coordinator (unless the member of staff feels it is more appropriate to go directly to the Head).
- If consultation with the Year leader or KS coordinator does not produce a satisfactory resolution of the problem and further advice is necessary, he/she should consult the Head or, in her absence, the Deputy Head.
- If the issue concerns another member of staff it will be important for the Head to convene a time to meet with that member of staff and to hear his/her views.
- Matters of racial or sexual discrimination or harassment will be considered very seriously.
- The Head will consider what action needs to be taken to resolve the cause for complaint. If the particular circumstances of the complaint fall outside the Head's field of experience, she may refer to the Board of Governors for advice.
- After consideration and having reached a decision as to the best possible course of action to address the complaint, the Head will have another meeting with the member of staff in question and set out the proposed course of action to be followed. This may involve an informal meeting with all those involved, so that differences can be aired freely and responses considered.

Stage 2

- If the member of staff is still not satisfied that his/her complaint has been adequately resolved, the complaint should then be put in writing and it will be put before the Board of Governors.
- The Board of Governors will consider the complaint in conference with the Headmistress and may wish to interview the member of staff. The member of staff will be assured that they are able to speak freely about his/her concerns. The member of staff may bring a friend or colleague with him/her for support.
- The Board of Governors will make a recommendation, which will be communicated in writing to the Head and the member of staff, after considering the case. Every effort will be made to derive a satisfactory conclusion to the episode/event. However it may be that a difference of opinion will have to be accepted, yet this in no way invalidates the complaint procedure.
- In order to re-establish the happiness and sense of well-being of the member of staff and any other members of staff concerned as quickly as possible, each stage of the procedure must be addressed with optimum speed.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR CHILDREN

Every child at Notting Hill Prep has the right to be fairly and kindly treated by both other children and staff. Children may expect the staff to treat them with consideration, to give them the best education they can, to help them develop and to listen to their problems and try to solve them. If a child feels, for any reason, that he/she has not been appropriately treated there is a procedure in place that will provide help and support.

Strategies for maintaining safe environment

- Pupils know that they can ask for advice and support from a number of members of the school community: Headmistress, Deputy Head, School Secretary, Form Tutor, Head Boy/Head Girl, Prefects, buddy. This person may be the first point of contact in case of concern.
- Golden rules and PSHE will reinforce appropriate behaviour of child towards child.
- The Head has a stated open door policy for children at all times and will always give priority to children in need. Children are encouraged to go and see her, not just when they have a problem. This is important to establishing a happy balance at school, as it ensures that children can receive special attention even when school life is running smoothly.
- The designated anti-bullying monitors in the school are the Head Boy, Head Girl, Deputy Head Boy, Deputy Head Girl and Heads of Houses. One of these may be an alternative point of contact.
- The Head will treat any confidences with sensitivity. Notes will be added to the pupil confidential file, as a causal link can then possibly be identified if academic progress or behaviour deteriorate in any way.
- A 'Worry Box' is placed in the Reception Area into which children can put written notes if they prefer to remain anonymous.

Procedure for making a complaint

- In the first instance a child who feels he/she has been wronged either by another child, a member of staff or other adult in the school may seek advice from any of the nominated people above.
- The chosen person will listen carefully, ask questions as appropriate, show that they are concerned and take the child's complaint seriously. They will remind the child that it is very important to tell the truth as their complaint could get someone else into trouble. If the problem cannot be resolved in this preliminary discussion the member of staff will reassure the child that action will be taken to resolve the situation and that he/she (the member of staff) would like to talk to the Head about the problem.
- The member of staff will report the conversation in full to the Head.
- The child may decide to tell his parents and they will then bring the complaint to the attention of the Head.
- If the child decides to come in the first instance to the Head, she will similarly take the child's complaint seriously. She will remind the child that it is important to tell the truth and proceed following our stated procedure in the Bullying Policy – **listen, believe and act.**
- If the complaint concerns a case of bullying by another child the procedure detailed in the Bullying Policy will be followed.
- If the child's complaint is against a member of staff or other adult in the school, the Head will inform the member of staff concerned and interview any witnesses that may have been mentioned by the child.
- The Head will arrange a meeting with the said member of staff and discuss the issues raised by the child. It is hoped that during this meeting some agreement can be reached as to where the difficulty lies and how best to ensure that the child does not feel the cause of complaint continues to exist.

- It may be that the teacher has wittingly or unwittingly treated the child harshly in class or it maybe that the child has perceived unfair treatment, which was in fact appropriate to the situation.
- In either case it is important that the child should know that his complaint has been thoroughly investigated and whatever the outcome the child and the adult must talk to each other about the problem and its resolution so that the child may feel comfortable and not fear bad feeling or even reprisal.
- The Head will monitor behaviour and attitude for a few weeks to ensure that there is no further cause for concern.
- Parents will be informed of the child's complaint and of the outcome of the investigation, if the child is happy to consent to the sharing of their problem. Every effort is made to encourage children to keep open all lines of communication between school and home.
- If the complaint is of a more serious nature that constitutes an issue of abuse, the procedures detailed in the **Child Protection Policy** (and in particular the **Policy for Allegations of Abuse against a member of staff**) will be followed.
- Written records of all complaints are dated and kept in a locked file in the Head's office.

It is our stated policy that every child at Notting Hill Prep has the right to start and end their day in a happy frame of mind and to this end we believe it is very important that children speak out if they are unhappy for whatever reason.

APPENDIX 1

Composition of the complaints panel

The following guidance on the independent panel member comes from a letter sent by the DfES to the ISC General Secretary in 2002 and, although dated, is still extant:

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the police force – might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

Would it be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member? The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

Where a complaint is made against the management of the school, governors may be considered to be directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Under these circumstances, it would not be appropriate for governors to sit on the panel and all appointed members should be independent of the management and running of the school.