



## 5.3 Policy for Complaints (EYFS & KS1-3)

Reviewer responsible:	<b>Head</b>	Date of last review:	<b>09/22</b>
Reviewed by:	<b>SK / NB</b>	Date of next review:	<b>09/23</b>

## **Policy for Complaints**

### **1 Introduction**

Notting Hill Prep prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents (meaning those parents whose children are current pupils at NHP) do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. The procedure does not apply to past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. This procedure applies to the whole school including those children in the EYFS setting.

### **2 What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction concerning a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for their child and they can be assured that their child will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their child raises in good faith. The school will always seek to deal with any concerns or representations as quickly as possible in order to reach an amicable resolution. Where formal complaints arise, the school will respond within the time scales set out in this policy unless further time is needed to conduct a thorough investigation. In these circumstances, parents will be advised of any modified time scale to investigate the complaint.

### **3 Usual Time Scale for Dealing with Complaints**

Any complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during the holiday period (parents will be advised of revised timings). It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (parents will be advised of revised timings).

Covid-19 – it may be necessary to review the time scales in this policy during the pandemic to allow for flexibility the school may need as a consequence of disruption or staff absence. Should this need to occur, the complainant will be advised of the revised timings.

### **4 The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure**

The school will provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- Stage 1 – Informal Resolution
- Stage 2 – Formal Resolution
- Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

### **5 EYFS**

Any complaints regarding the EYFS will be investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school must provide a record of complaints to Ofsted and ISI on request. Their details are available at the end of this document.

## **6 Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally through sensitive and supportive consultation with the parents concerned, ensuring that their complaint has been fully aired and understood and a satisfactory resolution has been achieved.
- If parents have a complaint, whether it relates to education issues, pastoral care or a disciplinary matter, they should normally contact their child's form or subject teacher in the first instance. 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 a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- Teachers are requested to pass on complaints to a member of SMT, who will lead the investigation. The evidence gathering may well include conversations with the teacher who passed on the complaint, and other staff members as required.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Department, the SMT or Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or subject teacher unless the Head of Department/SMT Member/Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- A query/complaint relating to financial matters such as fees or extras should be raised in the first instance with the Bursar.
- The form teacher or subject teacher will enter a written record on CPOMS of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days, or in the event that the form teacher or subject teacher 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.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, c/o Notting Hill Prep and marked 'private and confidential'. The Chair of Governors will agree the process for investigation in accordance with this policy and the time scales therein.

## **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

- If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head (even if a meeting with the Head has taken place during the informal stage of this procedure). The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter 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, or member of staff designated by the Head, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and they will be stored in a secure place and kept confidential.
- 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. The Head will give reasons for her decision.
- 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 of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Bursar (the Panel Clerk) within 5 working days of the Head's decision. The Bursar has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Appeal Panel.
- Requests will usually only be considered if the procedures for an informal (Stage 1) and then a formal complaint (Stage 2) have been completed. A copy of all relevant documents and the parent/s' full contact details should accompany the letter to the Bursar. The Bursar will acknowledge this request within 5 working days. Requests received during half-term breaks or school holidays will be acknowledged within 5 days of the start of the new term or half term. If assistance is required, for example because of a disability, the Bursar will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- 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 Panel Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 14 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 five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If the parents decide not to attend the hearing, the Panel Hearing will still go ahead to consider the parents' complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint (unless the parents indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further).
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and parents will be advised of the process and time scale.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations which it will complete within 14 days of the hearing.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by email or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

The DfE can also order the Independent Schools Inspectorate to take minor complaints into account when a school is next inspected.

## **7 Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a confidential written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing. In addition, for complaints resolved at Stages 2 or 3, the written record will detail by what means and at what stage the complaint was resolved and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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)

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.

The school will provide parents, further to a written request, with the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure (Stages 2 and 3) during the preceding school year. The response to the request will also be made in writing. The details of individual complaints will not be disclosed during this process.

NHP will provide ISI, 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 for at least seven years. Records containing allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reach normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

**Contact Details:**

Parents of children in the EYFS setting may additionally complain directly to Ofsted and/or ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements:

Ofsted: 0300 123 4234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

ISI: 020 7600 0100 or by email: [complaints@isi.net](mailto:complaints@isi.net)

SK September 2022