



5.3 Policy for Complaints (EYFS & KS1-3)

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Policy for Complaints

1 Introduction

This policy applies to complaints raised by current parents. While the school will respond to complaints raised by former parents, there is no obligation to address these under the School complaints policy.

Notting Hill Prep prides 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 with care and in accordance with this procedure. This policy 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

1. 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.
2. 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).

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

1. 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.
2. 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).
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. A query/complaint relating to financial matters such as fees or extras should be raised in the first instance with the Head of Finance and Operations.
6. A written record will be logged on iSAMS of any concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and what action was taken. Complaints are also recorded by a member of SMT on the complaints log. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days, or in the event that the member of staff 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.
7. 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

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. It may be necessary for the Head, or member of staff designated by the Head, to carry out further investigations.
11. 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.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

15. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Head of Finance and Operations (the Panel Clerk) within 5 working days of the Head's decision. The Head of Finance and Operations has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Appeal Panel.
16. 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 Head of Finance and Operations. The Head of Finance and Operations 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 Head of Finance and Operations will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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).
21. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent/s' 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.
22. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations which will be finalised within 14 days of the hearing.
23. 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

1. 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).
2. 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)
3. 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.
4. 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.

8 Closure of Complaints

1. Very occasionally, the School will feel that it needs to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied. Despite the school's attempts to resolve a complaint, it is sometimes not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes and there must be an agreement to disagree.
2. If a complainant persists in making representations to the school then it can be extremely time consuming and detract from our responsibility to look after all of the children in our care. For this reason the school is entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, telephone calls, letters or emails) on a complaint where the school feels it has taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and the complaint has exhausted the official process.
3. Where a complainant has been through the school's internal complaints procedures and is still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the Governing Body, then the DfE School Complaints Unit can be contacted via the DfE website. The DfE advise that unless the school is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there

is little further action that can be taken, as Governing Bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the local authority or Secretary of State.

9 Unreasonable Complaints and Serial and Persistent Complainants

1. The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.
2. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:
 - Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
 - Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
 - Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
 - Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
 - Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
 - Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seek to have them replaced;
 - Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
 - Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
 - Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE
 - Seeks an unrealistic outcome;
 - Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone, either while the complaint is being dealt with or at other times.
3. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face to face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:
 - Maliciously;
 - Aggressively
 - Using threats, intimidation or violence;
 - Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
 - Attempting to disguise their identity including use of false email addresses or withheld phone numbers;
 - Knowing it to be false;
 - Using falsified information;
 - Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.
4. Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent as it could delay the

outcome being reached.

5. Whenever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' judgement. If the behaviour continues the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan.
6. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police may be contacted. This may include banning an individual from the School.

10 Summary

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. Safeguarding records, including those 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.

Number of Level 2 complaints for academic year 2023/24: 5

Number of Level 3 complaints for academic year 2023/24: 2

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 4666 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI: 020 7600 0100 or by email (preferred): complaints@isi.net

MS August 2024