

# **Hulme Hall Grammar School**

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Aims**

The School is an open community and aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be discussed and then resolved.

If parents do have a complaint, it should be dealt with in accordance with this procedure. All complaints will be handled sensitively and as quickly as possible.

This procedure also extends to handling complaints from the public. Any reference to parents in this procedure, also includes the public.

### **What constitutes a complaint ?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with, or concern about, a real or perceived problem

A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example,

- Done something wrong.
- Failed to do something that it should have done.
- Acted unfairly.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department, about an individual member of staff or about a specific incident.

All complaints will be handled seriously, as an unresolved issue may become a festering dispute or even a confrontation. Our procedure aims to handle both formal complaints and the informal raising of concerns.

### **Complaints Log**

All complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Log and, where referable to a pupil, also in the pupil's file. The Log shall contain the following information :

- Date that the complaint was received.
- Name of parent.
- Name of pupil.
- Brief statement of issue.

- Location of files containing details of the issue or incident.
- Member of staff handling the issue.
- Brief statement of outcome.

The Complaints Log is entirely distinct from other files dealing with the complaint, which may for example, contain confidential information.

### **Stage 1 Informal Complaint Procedure**

Unless the matter is especially pressing or is likely to be of significant concern to the parent, the pupil, and / or the school, parents are requested to initially adopt the informal complaints procedure, which is designed to bring about a swift resolution to the complaint. It is hoped that the majority of complaints can be handled in this way.

- (a) Parents should approach their class teacher with their concerns either verbally or in writing. This will normally be followed by a meeting.
- (b) If this does not provide satisfaction, or if the complaint is about the class teacher, parents should approach the Headmaster with their complaint. Such complaints will be referred to the class teacher immediately, unless the Headmaster decides to deal with it himself.
- (c) If the complaint is about treatment to or by a pupil, the Headmaster, Head of Year (and in some cases, the Designated Child Protection Officer), shall be informed.
- (d) The class teacher or Headmaster will record the nature and date of the complaint in the Complaints Log and, where referable to a pupil, to the pupil's personal file.
- (e) If the complaint can be dealt with immediately to the parent's satisfaction, the Complaints Log and pupil's file will simply be noted with the outcome of the event.
- (f) If the complaint cannot be immediately resolved or requires further investigation, the Headmaster will send a letter to the parent acknowledging receipt of the complaint, giving particulars of it and providing a timeframe within which it is hoped the complaint can be resolved.
- (g) Under normal circumstances, the school should aim to deal with such complaints within a timeframe of [ 5 ] working days.
- (h) The member of staff dealing with the complaint will discuss the matter with the parents in an attempt to resolve the issue.
- (i) Once the complaint has been resolved, the Headmaster shall record the outcome of the complaint in the Complaints Log and the personal file of the pupil / teacher.

## **Stage 2 Formal Procedure**

If the informal procedure fails to produce an outcome that satisfies the parents and / or the parents wish to disregard the informal procedure, the parents can proceed to the formal complaints stage.

- (a) The parents must put their complaint in writing and send it addressed to the Headmaster.
- (b) The Headmaster will enter the date and nature of the complaint into the Complaints Log and, where referable to a parent / teacher, into the personal file of the pupil / teacher.
- (c) The Headmaster will write to the parents, acknowledging receipt of the complaint, providing particulars of it and providing a timeframe within which it is hoped that the complaint can be resolved.
- (d) If necessary, the Headmaster shall inform the Year Head, Designated Child Protection Officer and / or the Chair of Governors.
- (e) It is hoped that the Headmaster will discuss the complaint with the parent within [ 5 ] working days to see if an immediate resolution to the problem can be found. Formal notes will be kept of any discussions.
- (f) If necessary, the Headmaster will commence investigations into the complaint, which will be concluded within [10 ] working days.
- (g) If the complaint is about the Headmaster, or relating to a sanction / school procedure endorsed by the Headmaster, the parent should write to the Chair of Governors. A copy of this letter should also be sent to the Headmaster. The Chair of Governors should adopt the procedure noted above (points e and f).
- (h) Once investigations have been completed, the Headmaster or Chair of Governors will inform the parents of his decision, together with his reasons and record this in the Complaints Log and the pupil's / teacher's files. He will also inform the parents of their right to appeal to the **Complaints Panel**.

## **Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing**

This stage can only be invoked by the parents if they have exhausted all attempts to resolve the complaint at the Formal Procedure Stage either with, or without, commencing at the Informal Stage.

The Governing Body shall establish a Complaints Panel. This shall be chaired by a Governor (referred to as the 'Chair'), but who is **not** the Chair of Governors.

If the 'Chair' is not satisfied that the Formal Procedure Stage has been fully exhausted, he/she can decide in his/her discretion, to refuse to accept the complaint and refer it back to the Headmaster, unless the complaint is about the Headmaster.

If the 'Chair' decides to deal with the complaint, the following procedure shall apply :-

- (a) The Complaints Panel will consist of not less than 3 people, none of whom are directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and at least one of whom is totally independent of the management and running of the school.
- (b) The Panel will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and ask if the parent wishes to provide any further information or documents about the complaint. Alternatively, the Panel may ask for further information or documents. The Panel will also ask the parent if there are any dates when the parents will be unable to attend a Panel Hearing to present the complaint.
- (c) On receiving the parent's response, the panel shall set a hearing date which shall take place within [15] working days or as soon as possible thereafter. The parent shall receive not less than [ 3 ] working days notice of the Hearing.
- (d) Copies of all documents will be provided by the Panel to the parent not less than [3 ] working days before the Hearing.
- (e) The parent is entitled to attend the Hearing and be accompanied, although **not** by legal representation.
- (f) After hearing the complaint and asking any questions that it deems necessary, the Panel shall retire to consider its decision. Where possible, it is hoped that an immediate decision can be reached, although it is possible that the Panel may need to undertake further investigation before a decision can be reached. A decision must be reached within [ 5 ] working days.
- (g) Any decision reached by the Panel shall be confirmed in writing to the parent, Headmaster, the Chair of Governors and, if appropriate, the person about whom the complaint was made. Reasons for the decision, together with any recommendations shall also be provided.
- (h) The Panel will ensure that the necessary entries are noted in the Complaints Log and personal files.
- (i) The Panel's decision shall be final.

### **Confidentiality**

The school shall ensure that all complaints, whether formal or informal, are treated sensitively and confidentially, save where information must be provided to an Inspector or by virtue of any legal obligation.

In keeping with the school's aim of openness and fairness, it is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by pupils should not rebound adversely on them or on other pupils.

## **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints may arise where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified. They may come from parents or members of the public.

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils may be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders about the school's expectations.

Parents and members of the public should be encouraged to provide their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Headmaster's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending upon the nature of the complaint. Anonymous complaints will be recorded into the Complaints Log.

Anonymous complaints about child abuse will be dealt with under the guidelines set out in the school's Child Protection Policy.

## **Evaluation of the Complaints Procedure**

It is important for the school to learn from any complaints, whether justified or not, in order to avoid repetition in the future. The Governors should monitor the complaints procedure to ensure that such issues are handled properly.

The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring the smooth running of these procedures, including adherence to the various timeframes and that parents are content with these procedures.

## **Inspection**

A copy of this procedure is available upon request at any time to parents of pupils at the school, parents of prospective pupils and members of the public.

**COMPLAINTS LOG**

1. Date that the complaint was received .....
  2. Complainant(s) .....
  3. Brief description of complaint .....  
.....  
.....  
.....
  4. Location of files containing details/reports of the incident/issue .....  
.....  
.....
  5. Member of staff dealing with the complaint .....
  6. Other members of staff/governors who have been informed or who were involved in the investigation .....  
.....
  7. Brief statement of outcome.  
Complaint resolved at (tick box)                      Stage 1       Stage 2       Panel   
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.....
- Name ..... Position ..... Date .....