



Complaints Procedure Policy

School Mission Statement:

***“Learning and growing in
the light of the gospel”***

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure has been created to meet the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 and as subsequently amended in 2010 to include specific reference to schools with an Early Years Foundation Stage; the Children Act 1989 and subsequently amended in 2009, 2011 and 2013, and with reference to the Education and Skills Act (2008, sections 108 & 109) together with the ISI Regulatory Framework September 2015.

Grace Dieu Manor School prides itself on the quality of its teaching and the level of pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint, however, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. This procedure applies to all sections of the School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential, except in so far as is required by sections 108 & 109 of the Education and Skills Act where disclosure is required in the course of an ISI School inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails, e.g., The Secretary of State. The School 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.

This Policy will be made available to parents and prospective parents on the School's website; a copy is available for inspection at School during the School day and parents are informed of how to view the Policy. The School will keep a record of all complaints received during each academic year and this record will be retained for at least three years. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year will be made available to parents and prospective parents on request, but also appears on the bottom of the Policy.

Introduction

Sometimes, parents do not wish to complain as such, but rather voice a concern or anxiety in an informal manner. In all cases, they must not hesitate to speak to us. Our line is: "if parents are thinking about mentioning something, then they must". Our experience is that parents at Grace Dieu feel that they can easily approach staff to share their anxieties and this is just as it should be.

Aims of the Policy

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and that it is resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in the School's ability to safeguard and promote standards and welfare.

Complaints typically emanate from one of 3 sources; parents/guardians, pupils or members of the public. Complaints from members of the public will normally be treated in a similar way to complaints from parents. This Policy, therefore, deals mainly with the procedures regarding informal and formal complaints by parents and pupils. Whilst parents may sometimes wish to raise issues on behalf of pupils, there are other issues which pupils may choose to raise on their own behalf and which are best raised by them.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate directs that the details of all formal complaints be recorded by Schools in a complaints log, along with an indication of the action which is taken and the outcome. The Headmaster maintains this log at Grace Dieu Manor School.

Further aims of the Policy

- To promote a culture from Nursery to Year 6 at Grace Dieu that is open and welcoming.
- To demonstrate to parents and pupils that their opinions are valued.
- To encourage parents and pupils to raise any concerns that they might have.
- To enable parents to feel comfortable in communicating with the School.
- To enable members of staff to feel comfortable when dealing with complaints.
- To establish a clear procedure for dealing with formal complaints.

In the case of concerns to be voiced informally:

Parents can always talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. It is helpful if they can be as clear as possible about what is troubling them.

It is perhaps best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue in question – for example, it would be normal to raise routine academic or pastoral matters with the Class Teacher/Nursery Nurse/Manger (0 – Year 6). The Deputy Head, the Head of EYFS and Nursery or the Curriculum Manager will also be keen to hear of any such concerns that parents might have.

These members of staff may be able to sort things out quickly and informally and to everyone's satisfaction. However, if parents are still concerned, they may prefer to take a more serious matter to a senior member of staff, for example:

- the Deputy Headteacher who is responsible for disciplinary/pastoral matters throughout the School or
- the Deputy Headteacher and Curriculum Manager whose responsibility covers the academic life of the whole School;
- the Assistant Bursar who looks after financial issues,
- the General Manager who looks after those areas relating to health and safety, and catering, and grounds, for instance;

Parents can, of course, always contact the Headmaster, but, it would be usual to explore the avenues outlined above, rather than contacting the Headmaster in the first instance.

Procedure if a parent/guardian wishes to make a formal complaint:

At Grace Dieu, we consider a formal complaint to be a verbal or more usually written statement of protest or remonstrance. It is more than an expression of unease, a statement of concern or a suggestion for improvement, all of which can be handled within the normal channels of communication. A complaint is, unmistakably, a formal statement which requires a formal response.

If a parent wishes to make a formal complaint about something that has happened in School or about something that has caused concern, then, to establish that formal procedure, it would normally be expected that such a complaint is made known in writing to a senior member of staff:

- Head of Pre-Preparatory Department/Nursery Manager
- Deputy Headteacher or Curriculum Manager
- Headmaster
- General Manager
- Assistant Bursar

1. Informal resolution

It is anticipated that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

When parents do have a complaint or concern, they should normally make first contact with the most appropriate staff member listed above. In many cases, the matter will be resolved to the parents' satisfaction straight away by this means. If the Class teacher/Nursery Nurse cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult the Deputy Headteacher, Head of Pre- Prep/Nursery Manager or Headmaster, as appropriate.

Complaints made directly to a more senior member of staff will normally be referred to the Class teacher/Nursery Nurse, unless it is deemed inappropriate to do so.

A member of staff receiving a complaint will make a written record of the complaint, recording the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within **28 days***, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with formal resolution procedure below.

* Sometimes concerns, e.g., friendship issues, are not resolved over fixed periods of time. The specific concern that is raised under Section 1 will seek to address the concern as quickly as it is possible to do so in order that all involved are satisfied that the concern/complaint is being addressed.

2. Formal resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint **in writing** to the Headmaster.

If the written complaint is received during term-time, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter, within **7 days** of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the written complaint is received in the School holidays, a revised time-scale may apply in exceptional circumstances, but the School would seek to apply a **7day limit** as above.

It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he will make a decision and parents will be informed of this decision, in writing, within **28 days** (including a complaint made against the EYFS setting) - a time frame to be adhered to even if the School has ended for a holiday period.

If parents are still not satisfied with this decision, they may proceed to request a panel hearing. Parents may also wish to contact the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, www.isi.net, or in the case of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted, www.ofsted.gov.uk, about their concerns.

3. Panel hearing

A Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Headmaster.

Following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, parents wishing to proceed to a panel hearing should write to the Clerk to the Governors at Grace Dieu Manor School, Whitwick, LE67 5UG, giving details of their complaint and any subsequent action taken by the School. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge a letter requesting a Panel Hearing within **48 hours** following receipt.

The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration who will then advise all parties of a date for which the Panel Hearing will be set. Confirmation of this date for all parties will be received within **10 working days** following contact from the Clerk to the Governors.

The Panel will consist of at least two serving School Governors and, in addition, a suitable person who is independent of the management or governance of the School.

The Panel members, who should not have had any direct involvement with matters detailed in the complaint, will be appointed by the Chair of Governors.

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 will be supplied to relevant parties (including the complainants) not later than **3 days** prior to the hearing. The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person, who may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not, however, normally be appropriate.

The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure. The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

- the documents provided by both parties; and
- any representations made by you, the Headmaster or relevant staff members.

If, after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Headmaster or to the Governing Body as necessary.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint at the time of the hearing, without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider to be relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and will make known their findings and their recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents, informing them of their decision (their findings and recommendations) and the reasons for it, **within 28 days** of the hearing – a time frame to be adhered to even if the School has ended for a holiday period following a Panel hearing.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint had been made.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints occur where there is no indication as to the name or address of a complainant, or where a complainant indicates that he or she does not wish to be identified.

Complaints from members of the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils could, if appropriate, be dealt with on a general basis, with a reminder about the standards and expectations of a school.

Parents and pupils should always be encouraged to provide their names and should be given a reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If a complainant is adamant that they wish to remain anonymous, it is at the Headmaster's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken.

Anonymous, formal complaints will also be recorded in the Register of Complaints.

The School keeps a record of all complaints (formal) in its Register of Complaints. This records complaints whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a Panel Hearing and the action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless whether they are upheld).

Complaints and subsequent correspondence is kept confidential except when the need to access them by ISI, Ofsted in the case of an Early Years complaint, or other relevant body makes request for access under law.

(There was one formal complaint made in academic year 2015/2016)

Revised August 2016 (PSF)