

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

This policy also applies to parents of EYFS pupils and Boarders and is available for parents of pupils who have left the school if a procedure had begun before the pupil left the school.

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### **Overview Statement**

This procedure is for use by parents (and guardians) of current pupils of the School in circumstances in which they have a complaint regarding their own or their child's treatment and which does not fall within the scope of other procedures.

For the avoidance of doubt, this procedure does not apply to parents (and guardians) of prospective pupils or pupils who have left the School voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the School).

The School will make written records of all formal complaints (including any relating to the boarding provision), the date on which they were received, any meetings or interviews held in relation to the complaints, and whether they were resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a review hearing. The records will include any actions taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld). Records regarding formal complaints which do not have safeguarding implications shall be retained for a minimum of 7 years.

At each stage in the procedure, the School's aim is to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, the School will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the School may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the School will try to ensure that the event complained about will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review School policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The School will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.

The School will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

### **Informal Stage (Stage 1)**

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally, normally within 14 days. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of parents' complaints are better addressed through informal resolution.

Parents with complaints should, in the first instance, raise these informally with an appropriate member of staff (which in most cases is likely to be the pupil's class teacher or form tutor). In most cases, this will lead to a satisfactory resolution.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year, Deputy Head, or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher or form tutor unless the Head of Department, Head of Year, the Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The class teacher or form tutor will make a written record 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 class teacher or form tutor 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 the official complaints procedure.

### **Formal Stage (Stage 2)**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis and the parent remains dissatisfied, then they should put their complaint in writing, using the form attached, addressed to the Head. The written complaint should outline the nature of the complaint, why they remain dissatisfied, and the resolution sought. If the Head, or a decision taken by them, is the subject of the complaint, the written complaint should be addressed to the Head of Charterhouse, Charterhouse, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2DX.

In most cases, the Head will communicate with the parent, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to acknowledge receipt. In some cases, the Head's initial communication itself will lead to a resolution of the complaint.

Upon receiving a written complaint, the Head may feel it necessary to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Having carried out their investigation, the Head shall inform the parents in writing of their decision and the reasons for the decision within 21 days of receiving the complaint. If it is inappropriate for the Head to deal with the complaint (e.g. because he is the subject of the complaint or has been materially involved in circumstances directly involved with the complaint), the Head of Charterhouse will (if necessary) investigate and respond in writing within 21 days of receiving the complaint.

If parents remain dissatisfied with the decision reached at Stage 2, they should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of the official complaints procedure.

### **Review Hearing (Stage 3)**

Parents must only apply for a review hearing after the informal and formal stages above have been exhausted.

The application for a review hearing should be in writing using the form attached and must outline the nature of the parent's complaint, why they remain dissatisfied and the resolution sought. The letter should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Body, Charterhouse, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2DX and should be sent within 7 days of the date you received a written Stage 2 decision from either the Head or the Head of Charterhouse.

### **Review Panel**

The Review Panel will comprise at least 2 members of the Governing Body nominated by the Chair of the Governing Body, and 1 person who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The members of the panel will, so far as is reasonably possible, have no previous detailed knowledge of the case or of the pupil(s) and parents concerned and will not usually include the Chair of the Governing Body. The panel will elect its own Chair.

The Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the panel, will formally acknowledge the application for a review hearing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as time allows (normally within 21 days though this may take longer outside term-time).

### **Review Hearing**

The hearing will take place at the School or such other place as the Chair of the Review Panel should determine.

Those present at the hearing will normally be:

- The Review Panel
- The Head (unless this is considered inappropriate because he is the subject of the complaint)
- Other members of staff (if appropriate)
- Parents or those with parental responsibility
- The pupil (if appropriate)
- Clerk to the Governing Body or someone to take a note of the hearing

Parents may be accompanied by a friend, or a member of staff acting as a friend if required, but not a legal representative or representative from the media. Parents should inform the Review Panel of the individuals attending the hearing 3 working days before the hearing. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the parents (and if applicable their friend) are able to attend the hearing but the hearing will proceed in their absence if they are not able to attend.

### **Documents**

Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of the relevant documents. The parents shall be entitled to copies of any documents that will be considered at the review hearing.

If the Review Panel feels it is important, it may require that additional details connected to the complaint or related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of material outlining these details should be given to all involved parties at least 3 working days prior to the hearing.

The Review Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

### **Proceedings**

The proceedings will be chaired by 1 member of the Review Panel and conducted in a formal manner. A minute will be kept of the main points that arise.

If the Head considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chair of the Review Panel may require that the name of that person, and the reason for withholding it, be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chair may direct that the person be identified.

Parents will be given an opportunity to have their say.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

If possible, the Review Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. However, the Review Panel can investigate further as it sees fit.

### **Decision**

The Review Panel will consider the points raised by the parents and the evidence gathered and will make a decision about the complaint and make recommendations.

The decision and any recommendations of the Review Panel will be notified in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governing Body and (where appropriate) the person(s) complained of, by the Chair of the Review Panel, usually within 7 days of the hearing, subject to further investigations being required.

The decision of the Review Panel will be final. The School will not engage in further correspondence regarding the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of this policy. Repeated attempts made by parents to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of this policy, will be regarded as vexatious.

A copy of the decision and any recommendations will be retained at the School for reference by the Head and the Governing Body.

In exceptional circumstances, in order to ensure a fair decision-making process, deviation from the foregoing procedure may be authorised by the Review Panel. Parents will be notified of any such deviations relevant to any review that they request. Any such deviation will be within the standards set out in The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The School pledges to treat all complaints seriously and, so far as reasonably possible, all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be treated confidentially within the requirements of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails. Similarly, confidentiality is expected of the parents, the subject(s) of the complaint and any others who may be involved in the proceedings or have access to any related documents.

Please note that the number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year (including those relating to boarding provision) is available from the School upon request.

### **Contacting Education Authorities**

Copies of complaints may be sent to:  
The Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI)  
[info@isi.net](mailto:info@isi.net)

Ofsted: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Stage 2 Complaint Submission Form

Please complete and return to:

Head

Windlesham House School

London Road, Pulborough, RH20 4AY

[bevans@windlesham.com](mailto:bevans@windlesham.com)

who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>
<b>Postal address:</b>          <b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time phone number</b> <b>Evening phone number</b> <b>Email address</b>

**Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, events, key evidence etc.) in order to allow the matter to be fully investigated.**

***(You may attach additional documents if you wish; please be sure to number them clearly.)***

**What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. with whom have you spoken or to whom have you written and what has been the outcome?)**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the issue at this stage?**

**If you are attaching additional documents, please number these attachments and list details below.**

**Signature: Date:**

**For School use only**

**Date complaint form received:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date complaint referred:**

Please complete and return to:

who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>
<b>Postal address:</b>          <b>Postcode:</b>      <b>Day time phone number</b> <b>Evening phone number</b> <b>Email address</b>

**Dear Sir/Madam**

**I submitted a formal complaint to the School on .....and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed and/or the outcome. My complaint was dealt with at Stage 2 of the School's procedures and I received a response from ..... on .....**

**I am dissatisfied by the way the procedure was carried out because:**

and/or by the final outcome because:

*(you may continue on separate sheets or attach additional documents if you wish. In this case, please number the attachments and list details below)*

What actions do you think might resolve the issue at this stage?

I would like the panel to conduct a hearing

a) On the papers

b) At a meeting that I will attend

At the meeting I would like to be accompanied by the following:

Signature:

Date:

For use by the Clerk to the Governing Body

Date complaint form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Date complaint referred: