



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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## Introduction

We take great care to ensure the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our pupils and the maintenance of good relationships between pupils and staff, and staff and parents. Occasionally, things go wrong. When they do, we encourage parents to raise concerns early so they can be dealt with effectively and informally. This procedure sets out how parents can raise complaints. This complaints procedure does not apply to matters which have been dealt with under the procedures set out in our Behaviour Policy or to the termination of the parent contract in accordance with its terms.

Working days for the purposes of this procedure shall mean working days during school term time. The dates of halves (school terms) are published on the school website. Any complaints raised during school holidays (whether under Stage 1 or Stage 2) will be acknowledged when Eton opens for the new half (term).

## Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally without recourse to the formal procedures set out in Stages 2 and 3.
- If parents have a complaint they wish to raise informally, they should contact their son's House Master in the first instance unless the complaint concerns the House Master, in which case they should contact the Deputy Head (Pastoral). Any complaints raised directly with the Head Master will be referred by him to the appropriate members of staff.
- The House Master or Deputy Head (Pastoral) will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days. The House Master or Deputy Head (Pastoral) will consult appropriately (including meeting with the pupil, parents and any other persons involved) to resolve the complaint and restore relations to normal. A record of the action taken will be kept.
- All complaints will be treated in a timely and confidential manner. Knowledge of the complaint will be limited to those directly involved.
- Should the matter not be resolved in this informal way within 15 working days of the complaint first being raised, then parents should raise the matter with the Head Master for resolution under Stage 2.

## Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If parents are not satisfied by the outcome of the informal Stage 1 resolution, they may put a formal complaint in writing to the Head Master.
- The Head Master will respond to the parent concerned within five working days indicating how the School proposes to deal with the formal complaint, which would usually involve an investigation being undertaken as to the matters leading to the complaint. In appropriate circumstances, an alternative approach (for example mediation) may be proposed.
- In advance of responding formally to the parents with the School's proposed course of action, the Head Master may consult the parents and any other person involved as to the course of action and any arrangements that may need to be put in place to minimise the impact of the complaints procedure on the persons involved.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and any investigation is complete, a decision will be made as to the outcome of the complaint within 5 working days thereafter and the parents will be informed of this decision, and the reasoning behind it, in writing.
- It is hoped that parents will feel satisfied with the outcome, or that, at least, all of the concerns raised by the parents have been fully and fairly considered. If, parents are not satisfied they may appeal to the Provost (as chairman of the Governing Body).

### Stage 3 – Appeal to the Provost

- Parents must write (within ten days of the Head Master’s decision) to the Provost directly if they wish to appeal against the Head Master’s decision setting out, in detail, the grounds for the appeal. New matters of complaint, not previously dealt with should be raised as new concerns under Stage 1 or 2. If new matters of complaint are raised in an appeal to the Provost, they will be acknowledged and the parents informed of the person to whom they have been referred.
- The Provost will within 5 working days refer an appeal to an Appeal Panel for consideration. The Appeal Panel will usually comprise three members appointed by the Provost, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The members of the Appeal Panel will have no direct involvement with the matters of complaint and no connection to the pupil or the family concerned. The Clerk to the Provost and Fellows shall act as Clerk to the Appeal Panel.
- The Chair of the Appeal Panel will acknowledge the appeal and the Clerk will schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
- The Chair will issue written directions for the conduct of the appeal proceedings. If the Chair deems it necessary, he or she may require that further particulars of the complaint/appeal and any relevant documents or records be supplied in advance of the appeal hearing. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all parties wherever practicable not later than 5 working days prior to the appeal hearing.
- The Clerk will notify the parents and the Head Master of any directions and also of the date of the appeal hearing. The parents concerned (as well as representatives of the School) will be asked to confirm whether they plan to attend and speak at the hearing. The parents concerned will also be asked whether they would like another person may accompany them to the hearing. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation of either party will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Appeal Panel will resolve the parents’ complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- A full minute of the proceedings will be taken by the Clerk.
- Where further investigation is required, the Appeal Panel will decide how it should be carried out. This process shall be completed within 10 working days of the hearing.
- After due consideration of all facts the Appeal Panel shall decide whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint. It is not within the powers of the Appeal Panel to make any financial award nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents, but the Appeal Panel may make recommendations that the school consider action under other applicable procedures.

- After completion of any further investigation and due consideration of all facts the Appeal Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the Parents and to the Head Master. A copy will also be available for inspection on the College premises by the Fellows.
- Completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the school's Complaints Procedure.

### Provisions relating to stages 1 to 3

- A written record will be kept of all complaints made under Stage 2 (the formal procedure) and (i) whether they are resolved following the formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing; and (ii) action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The number of complaints dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure during the preceding academic year is published on the school's website.
- Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State for Education or in the course of the School's inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 or where any other legal obligation prevails. Such records will be retained in accordance with the school's Document Retention Guidelines.
- Nothing in this Policy shall prejudice the right of parents of a boy with SEN or a disability to seek redress from the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they believe their son has received unfavourable treatment.
- Nothing in this Policy shall prejudice the right of the school to require parents (who have been found to have raised a complaint in bad faith) to withdraw their son from the school in accordance with Condition 10.2.1 of the parent contract.

### Complaints procedure for pupils

- If a pupil needs advice or wants to talk over a problem they have ready access to three adults: the House Master, the Dame and their Tutor.
- They may also consult in confidence any of the School Chaplains or one of the School Counsellors in the Stephenson Centre for Wellbeing, one of the School Doctors or the Independent Listener.
- Any pupil needing to make a formal complaint should, in the first instance, always make the complaint to the House Master or, at least, make the nature of the complaint known to them. If the matter needs to be taken further by the complainant, because it cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the level of the House Master or because the complaint involves the House Master, the complaint should be made to the Deputy Head (Pastoral). A pupil making a complaint in good faith can always expect their complaint to be taken seriously and for it to be dealt with thoroughly.
- All complaints will be recorded with details of the date, nature of the complaint, the action taken and the outcome with any supporting documentation.
- Procedures concerning child protection and/or safeguarding matters are detailed in the Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.