



Complaints Procedure Policy Goodwyn School

Introduction

This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints. It should be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful. If a parent has any concerns about the school or the education provided, the matter should be discussed with their child's class teacher, the Headteacher or Principal at the earliest opportunity. The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this stage. It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures. Informal concerns are taken seriously and make every effort is made to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, this complaints procedure should be followed.

Definition

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Aims and Objectives

The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. There will be sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed. The aim is to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding. Complaints are not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Anyone can make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions).

This includes:

- parents or carers of children no longer at the school
- members of the public

In accordance with administrative law principles, complainants will be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless there is clear evidence that the complaint meets the serial complaint criteria. If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. A complaint cannot be marked as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

The Senior Management Team can use issues identified from across the spectrum of complaint investigations to:

- inform improvements within the school

- improve the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

Framework of Principles

The school's Complaints and Procedure Policy will:

- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation). This confidentiality does not apply to the Secretary of State or inspectors under section 162A of the 2002 Act.
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

How can a complaint be raised

We comply with obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Whilst it is common practice to ask for complaints to be made using a complaint form or in writing, complainants may have communication preferences due to:

- disability
- learning difficulties
- difficulties using English

Therefore a complaint may be made:

- in person, by telephone or in writing
- by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant. Written consent from the complainant before disclosing information to a third party will be necessary.

Formal Complaints Procedure- A 3 Stage Process

NB Timeframes may be longer as a consequence of staff absence due to the pandemic (November 2020)

Stage 1- Informal

If a parent feels that a concern has not been addressed through informal discussion with the school and you wish to have the matter formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, please set out the details on the attached form (Appendix 1). Complaints against school staff are dealt with by the Headteacher (stage 1), then the Principal (stage 2)

If the matter is about these aspects it will be investigated by the Principal:

- the day-to-day running of the school
- the interpretation of school policies
- the actions or inactions of staff at the school

If the matter is about the Principal the parent should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the Senior Management Team, who will investigate it. The Senior Management Team member will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through dialogue but if the parent is still dissatisfied with the outcome a formal complaint will need to be made.

The people carrying out the investigation will review the way in which the complaint has been handled by the school and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly. They will write to the parent reporting the findings and recommendations of this investigation within *15 working days* of receiving the complaint.

If it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, then the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, but you are not entitled to know which procedure or the final outcome.

Stage 2- Formal

If a parent is not satisfied with the result from Stage 1, they may choose to refer their complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within *15 working days* of the completion of Stage 1.

At this Stage, the complaint will be considered by the Principal as well as who carried out the investigation in Stage 1 and the complainant will be informed in writing of the results of this review. The general principle is that the school should be able to produce documentary evidence to show that the complaint has received fair and proper consideration within the school's procedure. If the parent has any concerns, they may ask the Principal to re-open the investigation. The complainant will be kept informed of any delay.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the result they can request that Stage 3 of the procedure is enacted. This must be done in writing to the school within *15 working days* of the completion of Stage 2.

Stage 3- Panel Hearing

Stage 3 will be carried out by a panel of nominees (independent of the school workforce or management team), who will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the school.

In Stage 3, the panel will consist of at least 3 persons who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant with at least one person independent of the school. The meeting will take place within *28 working days* of the parent's request.

Parents will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if they wish, to put their case. The parent does not have the right for a legal representative. Although this can be allowed at the school's discretion. If the parent does not exercise the right to attend, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints procedure. The Principal will be given the same opportunities. The panel will write sending the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and making them available to the Principal and Headteacher within *5 working days* of the meeting. The decision of the panel is final.

If the parent is still not satisfied, they may wish to put their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

NB Take brief notes

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls should be taken. These should be:

- kept securely

- encrypted where appropriate

A copy of any written response should be added to the record.

Recording meetings

Where there are communication difficulties, recording devices can be used to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. All parties should agree in advance to being recorded.

Schools are data controllers in their own right and it will be at Goodwyn's discretion to decide for whether to allow complainants to record meetings, if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

Complainants may have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.

Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. They should provide you with evidence of bias in support of their request, as it's your decision whether to agree to it. If the appearance of bias is sufficient to taint the decision reached, Goodwyn will grant such requests.

If you've made reasonable attempts to accommodate complainants with dates for complaint meetings and they refuse or are unable to attend you can:

- convene meetings in their absence
- reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close

Communicating the outcome

The complainant will be told of:

- the conclusion and reasons for any decisions in writing
- any further rights of appeal

Copies of the minutes are issued to the complainant.

NB Occasionally, the school may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

We reserve the right to send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school's website or through our class message software.

Confidentiality

Copies of all correspondence relating to individual complaints (including emails and records of phone conversations, statements and records) will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. The School will provide Ofsted or 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 three years. Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666.

Monitoring and Review

The Senior Management Team monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved to ensure appropriate action has been taken and subsequent events do not reoccur. The Senior Management Team examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Availability

A copy of this procedure has been made available to all parents on our website, or on request a hard copy can be obtained from the school.

Number of Formal Complaints 2018-19

There were 0 formal complaints.

Reference: Independent Schools Standards Regulations September 2020

Reviewed:	May 2019 Updated June 2020 Updated November 2020
Reviewed by:	SMT
Next Review:	June 2021

Appendix One -

Please complete and return to Principal who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: