



Complaints Procedure Policy Goodwyn School

This policy applies throughout the school, including in the EYFS.

Introduction

This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints. 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 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 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.

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 Leadership 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 on the school website
- 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 109 of the 2008 Act.
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate
- redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's Senior Leadership Team so that services can be improved.

How can a complaint be raised

We comply with obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

NB Time frames may be longer as a consequence of staff absence and enforced school closures or illness of the complainant due to the pandemic (November 2020)

Formal Complaints Procedure- A 3 Stage Process

Stage 1- Informal

Informal concerns and complaints can be raised verbally or in writing to the Senior Leadership Team. If a parent feels that a concern has not been addressed through informal discussion with the school and they wish to have the matter formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, they may email the request for further action to the Senior Leadership Team via the school office. Parents will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint within 24 hours and the school will endeavour to resolve the complaint within 48 hours unless further investigation is needed which at this point will be explained to parents

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.

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

- the interpretation of school policies
- the actions or inactions of staff at the school
- 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 Leadership Team, who will investigate it. The Senior Leadership Team member will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through dialogue at the Informal Stage but if the parent is still dissatisfied with the outcome a formal complaint will need to be made (Stage 2) and a panel will be appointed to run the complaint at this stage.

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.

Disciplinary and capability procedures must respect confidentiality in relation particularly to the member of staff involved. This confidentiality is not just in relation to an outcome but also to the fact that a procedure is taking place. Therefore, the school cannot tell a parent that their complaint has resulted in a disciplinary or capability procedure taking place – it needs to be held separately and confidentially.

Whilst it is common practice to ask for complaints to be made in writing at Stage 2, 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.

At this Stage, the complaint will be considered by the Principal as well as any staff who carried out the investigation in Stage 1 and the complainant will be informed in writing of the results of this review. The school will produce sufficient 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.

Complaints at Stage 2 will normally be resolved within 15 working days and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing. 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 normally within 15 working days of the complaint progressing to Stage 2.

Stage 3- Panel Hearing

If the complainant is not happy with the school's resolution of the complaint at this stage, he or she should contact the Principal in writing to request that the complaint progresses to Stage 3.

Stage 3 will be carried out by a panel of nominees of

- at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
- one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school

The meeting will take place normally 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 or agree a date, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints procedure; the hearing can go ahead. 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 on the school premises normally within *5 working days* of the meeting. The decision of the panel is final.

The panel may decide that it needs to call for further evidence and may deem it necessary to reconvene at a later date

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

The proprietor may invite the school office manager or another appropriate person to attend the meeting as note-taker.

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 must 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 is 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.

A record of complaints which do not involve safeguarding concerns are to be kept for 7 years (due to the 6 year cycle of inspection). Where there is a safeguarding angle, see the DfE advice in note 219: 'Records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.'

Additional requirements relating to EYFS:

1. The school will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.
2. This 28-day requirement applies ONLY to complaints about the school not fulfilling the EYFS requirements. In other words, it applies, for example, if a parent complains that the EYFS curriculum does not develop the child's fine motor skills, but it does not apply if a parent is complaining that the child is always losing his wellies.
3. Where the matter remains unresolved, parents may contact ISI or Ofsted.

ISI

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Telephone 020 7600 0100
Fax 020 7776 8849
info@isi.net

OFSTED

By email

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

By telephone

The following helplines are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday:

general helpline **0300 123 1231**

By post

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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 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.

Monitoring and Review

The Senior Leadership Team monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Senior Leadership Team examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

- The log is kept in writing and must include a record of all complaints which reach stage 2 or beyond.
- The log records the stage at which the complaint was resolved.
- The log records action taken by the school as a result of complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

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 2021-22

There were 0 formal complaints.

Reference: Independent Schools Standards Regulations September 2015

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| Reviewed: | May 2019 Updated June 2020 Updated November 2020, February 2021, July 2022 |
| Reviewed by: | SLT |
| Next Review: | July 2023 |