

The Pavilion



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Completed by: J Kelly

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Next Full Review:

Rationale

In the course of every day at The Pavilion there are thousands of interactions between staff and students, staff and parents and carers and between students. We always try to communicate effectively and implement all processes and procedures fairly – but, as with any human organisation, sometimes things go wrong, communication fails, or we make a mistake.

In these circumstances we are very willing to listen to criticism and challenge and we hope to respond in a positive spirit in order to bring about improvement or redress.

Aims

The aims of our complaints procedure are:

- To ensure that anyone making a complaint about the school, or between persons within or connected with the school, is dealt with sympathetically and courteously. (Students will be dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour Policy)
- To take complaints seriously and investigate them fairly and thoroughly
- To ensure that where errors or faults on our part are demonstrated, they are remedied as far as is possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- To learn from complaints in order to make improvements to our practice and procedure

At each stage in the procedure the school will want to keep in mind ways in which the complaint might be positively resolved through:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that every effort will be made to prevent a similar situation arising
- An undertaking to review school policies in the light of the complaint

The Complaints Policy will be available at the school and published on the school website.

Practice

How do you make a complaint against the school?

What can you do?

Think clearly about the complaint you wish to make and what you want to achieve. If your complaint concerns an incident, please be ready to tell the school where, when and how you think it happened and who was involved. Your complaint might be about a difference of opinion, a matter of school policy or practice or a matter that needs clarifying. The outcome you wish may be an apology, an explanation or a review of practice or policy in the school (as outlined above)

How do I complain?

The school staff with designated responsibilities, the Head Teacher and the Management Committee are variously responsible for handling complaints about the school. In the first instance you must take your complaint straight to the school. Complaints can pass through several stages, described as follows. If you are unsure who is the most appropriate person to take your complaint to, contact the school and ask – giving an indication of the nature of your complaint.

Informal Stage

1. In the first instance, contact the school and find out who would be the most appropriate person to talk to
2. Arrange to speak to that person, either on the phone or by making an appointment to speak to them in person or fax, e-mail or write to them at the school
3. Their response will be by phone, e-mail or in writing within 15 working days

Most complaints are resolved satisfactorily at this stage and are brought to a close. If you are not satisfied your complaint moves on to Formal Stage 1.

Formal Stage 1

Contact the Head Teacher in writing (letter or email), describing your complaint and/or the reason you remain dissatisfied with the school's response.

It would be most helpful if you could state what you wish to achieve – an apology, an explanation, a change to school practice etc. Please do not forget to give your full name and contact details and, where applicable, the student's name, year and group.

The Head Teacher or designated member of staff will investigate the matter and will let you know in writing the outcome and any action to be taken. Please note that it can take some time for a school to complete an investigation. Teachers spend most of their time teaching and the Head Teacher has many planned commitments. Therefore it can take time to discuss matters with all those who may be involved. The school will respond to you within 15 working days.

If the complaint is about areas of the Head Teacher's or the Management Committee's responsibility then the complaint will be investigated by the Chair of the Management Committee or a designated member.

If you still remain dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been treated, you can ask for it to be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Management Committee, consisting of a panel of 3 members who have no prior knowledge of the complaint. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 1. This moves the complaint to Formal Stage 2.

Formal Stage 2

At this stage, the Complaints Panel will meet, usually within 15 school days of your request, to consider the process to date and the outstanding concerns and dissatisfactions.

- The panel will ask you and the Head Teacher to submit a written statement
- A date and time will be set for the panel to meet. You will be invited to attend so that you may present your views in person. If you wish, you may be accompanied by a friend or representative who can also speak for you
- The Panel will consider the views of both sides. They will come to a conclusion or a decision. This will be communicated in writing to both parties within 5 working days

The decision of the panel is final. If you still feel that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, you may wish to put your complaint in writing to the Local Authority and/or the Secretary of State for Education.

The Complaints File

This is kept by the Head Teacher. The file records complaints made by parents/carers and complaints made by members of staff about parents.

Each entry should record:

- (a) the name of the person making the complaint
- (b) the date of the complaint
- (c) the nature of the complaint and the name of all those involved
- (d) if the complaint was resolved and how
- (e) if it was not resolved, to whom it was referred and why
- (f) the report of the incident will have attached any supporting witness statements or other evidence

The Head Teacher will review the complaints file on a regular basis. The record of complaints made against staff and against parents/carers will be reported on an annual basis to the Chair of the Management Committee.

Complaints against parents

The Pavilion will operate the complaints procedure against the school and its staff alongside a procedure that allows staff to register complaints against parental behaviour. As with the parents' complaints procedure it is assumed that procedures to protect staff against inappropriate parental behaviour should be systematic and transparent. The school will, as with parental complaints, aim to deal with most complaints before they reach the formal stages of the procedure outlined below.

Formal staff complaints procedure

When a member of staff feels that they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour or language from a parent/carer, they should report this in writing to a senior member of staff, with a copy to their immediate line manager. Such incident reports will be recorded in the complaints file kept by the Head Teacher.

Stage 1

Following discussion between the member of staff, their line manager and the senior member of staff, an appropriate course of action will be decided upon. The parent/carer will be contacted by the member of staff concerned, the line manager or the senior member of staff. In most cases the matter will be satisfactorily resolved at this stage and no further action need to be taken.

Stage 2

If the matter is considered to be too serious to be dealt with under Stage One then the Head Teacher (or in her absence, the Deputy Head Teacher), will decide on a further appropriate response. If more formal action is required, the Head Teacher will consult with the Chair of the Management Committee.

Complaints between persons within the school

The Pavilion will operate the complaints procedure for complaints between adults within the school. As with complaints outlined previously, it is assumed that procedures should be systematic and transparent. The school will aim to deal with most complaints before they reach the formal stages of the procedure outlined below.

Formal staff complaints procedure

When a member of staff feels that they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour or language from an adult within the school they should report this in writing to the senior member of staff, with a copy to their immediate line manager. Such incident reports will be recorded in the complaints file kept by the Head Teacher.

Stage 1

Following discussion between the member of staff, their line manager and the senior member of staff, an appropriate course of action will be decided on. The other party will be contacted by the member of staff concerned, the line manager or the senior member of staff. In most cases the matter will be satisfactorily resolved at this stage and no further action need to be taken.

Stage 2

If the matter is considered to be too serious to be dealt with under Stage One then the Head Teacher (or in her absence the Deputy Head Teacher), will decide on a further response, following all relevant school policies as appropriate.

If more formal action is required, the Head Teacher will consult with Chair of the Management Committee.

Appendix 1: Establishing a Complaints Panel

The Management Committee should agree the composition of the complaints panel at the first meeting of the Management Committee each year. It is recommended that the names of 4 members are agreed from whom a panel of three may be drawn.

There are several points which any member sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

1. It is important that the hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No member may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, the Management Committee needs to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the members and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation
2. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously
3. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial
4. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults

Remit of the Complaints Panel

The panel needs to consider whether the complaint:

- Relates to a decision taken by the Head Teacher, member of staff or the Management Committee
- Is about the way a complaint or concern was handled

If the complaint was in relation to a decision taken by the Head Teacher or member of staff, the panel will need to consider whether:

- A** it was a decision within the Head Teacher's responsibility or
- B** an area where the Management Committee have responsibility, or share responsibility but have delegated this to the Head Teacher

If the complaint relates to A, the panel can:

- consider the manner in which the complaint was addressed but not consider an alternative outcome
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

If the complaint relates to B, the panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, within 5 working days with the panel's response.