

Complaints Policy & Procedure for Parents

This policy applies to all Abbot's Hill, including EYFS.

Abbot's Hill School aims to be a listening and responsive school. We encourage pupils, parents and staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones which can more easily be resolved. Under no circumstances will the school discriminate against a pupil because of expressions of concern or complaints.

1. Scope

1.1 A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. Examples are if a parent thinks that the school has:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have done
- Acted unfairly

1.2 This procedure is only applicable to parents of current pupils

1.3 This policy also applies to parents of former pupils if their complaint was initially raised, in accordance with this policy, while their child was still registered

1.4 Parents may not complain on behalf of others and groups of parents who wish to raise a matter are required to do so separately, as individual families

1.5 There is a separate policy concerning pupils who have been excluded from the school.

1.6 There is a separate policy for pupils to raise a complaint.

2. Stage 1- Informal Resolution

2.1 The school's active and ongoing communication with parents provides many forums for any concerns to be raised. Most complaints will be resolved quickly and effectively within the informal resolution process.

2.2 Parents who have any concerns or complaints should normally contact the teacher concerned (if it is an academic matter), the Head of Year/Class Teacher (if it is a pastoral matter) or the child's key person (in the case of children in the Nursery). Alternatively, they may address their concern to the relevant Head of Department or Nursery Manager, the Assistant Head of Prep, the Head of Prep, the Deputy Head or the Bursar.

2.3 To facilitate an effective investigation and speedy resolution, a parent must notify the school of their complaint within 10 working days* of the matter first coming to the attention of the parent.

2.4 A complaint can be raised by a parent through any normal mode of communication, including orally, and there is no requirement for the parent to state that their concern is "a complaint".

2.5 All records of meetings or phone calls are reviewed in line with our normal procedures by a member of the senior management team. If they identify the matter as being a complaint as

defined above, they must alert the Headmistress' office and ensure that a copy of the Record is sent to her office.

2.6 The Nursery Manager, Head of Prep, Deputy Head or Bursar will engage with the member of staff and/or the parent in question as appropriate throughout until the complaint is resolved or escalated.

2.7 We will acknowledge complaints by letter or email within 5 working days* of their receipt and to inform parents of how we intend to investigate the matter. This is necessary even if the complaint was raised orally and the acknowledgement was given orally.

2.8 We will send a letter or email to the parent within 10 working days* stating how the matter has been dealt with and what the outcome is. This letter or email is necessary even if there have been meeting(s) or phone call(s) with the parent on the subject of this complaint.

2.9 This letter or email will express the school's hope that this brings the complaint to a satisfactory closure. It will also advise that if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome, then they may escalate the complaint to formal resolution, in line with our complaints procedure, if they wish.

2.10 If the parent does not escalate their complaint in the manner laid down in this procedure, then the school will regard the complaint as closed.

2.11 A record of these letters will be kept for six years, and copies sent to the Headmistress' office

3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

3.1 Parents whose complaint has not been resolved by the Stage 1 process, should escalate their complaint formally in writing to the Headmistress within 5 working days* of the "closure" letter referred to in Stage 1.

3.2 The escalation letter should state clearly that they are making a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure. They should set out the nature of the complaint, the remedy sought, and include all relevant information.

3.3 Parents should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at Stage 1. If new matters be presented, parents will be advised that these will be dealt with under Stage 1.

3.4 The Headmistress will normally invite the parents concerned to a meeting to discuss the complaint within 7 working days* of receiving it. If parents are unable or unwilling to attend a meeting the Headmistress will proceed with her investigation based on the information provided.

3.5 The Headmistress will then carry out any necessary further investigations.

3.6 Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be maintained.

3.7 Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, together with reasons, within 21 working days* of receipt of the formal complaint.

3.8 The decision letter will express the Headmistress's hope that this brings the complaint to a satisfactory closure. It will also advise that if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome, then they may escalate the complaint to a panel hearing, in line with our complaints procedure, if they wish.

3.9 If the parent does not escalate their complaint in the manner laid down in this procedure, then the school will regard the complaint as closed.

3.10 A record of these letters will be kept for six years.

4. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

4.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 they should write to the Clerk to the Governors stating that they wish to make a formal complaint under Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy. This should be done within 10 working days* of the Headmistress' formal written response under Stage 2.

4.2 The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days* of receipt and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 working days*.

4.3 The Chairman of the Governors will convene a Complaints Panel to review the decisions taken by the Headmistress in Stage 2.

4.4 It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Headmistress or the Board of Governors.

4.5 The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school.

4.6 If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 working days* prior to the hearing.

4.7 The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

4.8 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation, although if further investigation is required, the Panel will direct this to be carried out.

4.9 The Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, within 10 working days* of the hearing.

4.10 The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmistress, the Board of Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made.

4.11 The decision of the Panel will be final.

4.12 A record of these letters will be kept for six years.

5. Recording and Reviewing

5.1 The Headmistress keeps a written record of all formal complaints received, of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing; and of any action taken by the school as a result of complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

5.2 During the academic year 2017-2018 the number of formal complaints made to the school was 0.

6. *Working Days

6.1 Working days run from 0800 – 1700 Monday – Friday during term time with the exception of the Nursery where working days include every day the Nursery is open.

6.2 At other times, staff may not be available to process complaints or carry out investigations.

6.3 Complaints received outside of these hours will be deemed to have been received the next working day.

6.4 If a parent does not communicate with the school within the time limits stated in this policy, the school will deem the complaint to have been resolved.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

7.2 Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by Part 7, Paragraph 25, of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. Records of all formal complaints (i.e. those which reach Stage 2) will be kept confidentially in a separate file for 3 years indicating whether they have been resolved and at what stage, as required by DfE regulations.

7.3 A record of the outcome of complaints will be made available for inspection by the Governing Board.

8. EYFS

8.1 Records of complaints relating to a pupil in the Early Years Foundation Stage are required to be maintained by the Head of Prep or Nursery Manager, as appropriate.

8.2 The school is required to maintain for at least six years a record of: the date, the source of complaint, the nature of complaint (including which standard it is related to), brief details, how it was dealt with and the actions and outcomes that resulted within the 28-day time frame and what feedback was provided by the parent.

8.3 Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage can make a complaint to Ofsted and/or ISI should they so wish. Contact details are as follows:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate

Ground Floor
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100 <http://www.isi.net>

8.4 In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage regulations, the School will provide Ofsted (and 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.

9. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

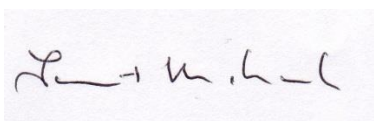
9.1 Once the internal complaints procedure has been exhausted, the school will inform parents (in writing):

- that AHS cannot settle the complaint with the parent;
- of the name and website address of an ADR entity which would be competent to deal with the complaint, should the parent wish to use ADR; and
- whether AHS is prepared to submit to an alternative dispute resolution procedure operated by that ADR entity.

Signed

Issue Date: June 2019

Review Date: June 2022 or earlier if major change requires



Janet Mark
Chairman of the Board of Governors