

COMPLAINTS POLICY PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

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Contents

Introduction	3
1. Scope	3
2. Stage 1- Informal Resolution	4
3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution	6
4. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing	6
5. Recording and Reviewing	7
6. *Working Days	7
7. Confidentiality	8
8. EYFS	8

Complaints Policy & Procedure for Parents/Guardians

Number of complaints (stage 2 and above) September 2021-August 2022 = 3

Introduction

'Abbot's Hill School' refers to Abbot's Hill Senior School and Abbot's Hill Prep School (including Abbot's Hill Pre-Prep and Nursery).

Abbot's Hill School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents/guardians/ do have a complaint, they can expect it to be dealt with by Abbot's Hill School in accordance with this policy.

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.

This policy refers to **complaints** and **concerns**, although both will be managed in the same way throughout this policy. This policy has been approved by the Board of Governors. It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2021. The policy applies to all sections of Abbot's Hill School including our EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) setting.

The procedures set out below may be adapted by the school as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. This policy applies to parents/guardians of pupils at Abbot's Hill School which includes a legal guardian or education guardian. Where pupils have left the school, this policy no longer applies.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent/guardian to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy. Concerns and complaints directly from pupils are dealt with under a separate procedure, a copy of which can be supplied on request.

This policy does not apply to pupil exclusion which is covered by the Exclusion Policy. We aim to resolve any complaint in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to "working days" we mean Monday to Friday, during term time. The dates of terms are published on the Abbot's Hill School website.

1. Scope

1.1 A complaint is any matter about which a parent/guardian of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. It may be about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. Examples are if a parent/guardian thinks that the school has:

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

Any other minor concern should be directed as per 2.4 below.

1.2 This policy is only applicable to parents/guardians of current pupils.

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

1.4 Parents/guardians may not complain on behalf of others and groups of parents/guardians/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 who wish to raise a complaint.

1.7 No complaint may be brought under this policy in relation to the non-payment of any sum(s) owing to the school. If a parent/guardian has a complaint regarding any action taken (or proposed to be taken) by the school as a result of their failure to pay any sum(s) owing to the school, the parent/guardian may write to the Clerk to the Governors at the school who will refer the matter to the Chair of the Finance Committee or the Chair of Governors. Similarly, if a parent/guardian wishes to make a complaint, their attention will be drawn to the school's standard Terms & Conditions under which a place is accepted; the making of a complaint does not remove the obligation to settle fees due and payable under those Terms & Conditions.

2. Stage 1- Informal Resolution

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

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

2.4 For ease, the following table sets out the person(s) whom the parent should contact depending on the nature of their concern or complaint:

Nature of concern	Nursery	Prep	Senior
Minor/day-to-day	Key worker	Class teacher	Form tutor/Subject teacher/HoD
Concern across a number of subjects/situations	Nursery Manager	Head of Pre-Prep (Reception – Year 2) Deputy Head, Prep (Year 3-6)	Head of Year
Concerns about the curriculum/quality of teaching	Nursery manager, Head of Pre-Prep	Deputy Head, Prep	Deputy Head, Academic
Concerns about pastoral or disciplinary matters	Nursery manager, Head of Prep	Assistant Head of Prep (Pastoral)	Deputy Head, Pastoral
Concerns regarding the Support Staff	The Bursar		

- 2.5 Any person in the table above or otherwise who is in receipt of a concern or complaint should refer this to the relevant key person, class or form teacher.
- 2.6 Concerns made directly to the Head of Prep/Head will usually be forwarded to the relevant class or form teacher or key person to be followed up by them as per 2.7 below.
- 2.7 The person/class/form teacher will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received and the action taken as a result of the complaint. The written record will be logged on CPOMS by the person/class/form teacher using the tag 'Parental Concern'.
- 2.8 The relevant person/class/form teacher, as referred to above in 2.5, will ensure that the concern or complaint is acknowledged by email within 2 working days of its receipt and inform parents/guardians/ of how the school intends to investigate the matter. This is necessary even if the complaint was raised orally and the acknowledgement was given orally.
- 2.9 All records of communications are logged on CPOMS by the nominated member of staff. If the matter is deemed a complaint as defined in Section 1, the Head of Prep, Deputy Head, Pastoral or Deputy Head, Academic or the Bursar will ensure that the Head's office is alerted and the Head's PA will ensure that the complaint is maintained and tracked in the central file.
- 2.10 It is hoped that most concerns/complaints will be resolved quickly and informally by the relevant person, class or form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved at this point to the parents/guardians' satisfaction. If the person, class or form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult other staff as appropriate.
- 2.11 A member of Exec will engage with the member of staff and/or the parent/guardian in question as appropriate throughout until the complaint is resolved or escalated.
- 2.12 Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days then the parents/guardians will be advised by the Head's/Bursars EA that they may proceed to Stage 2, at which point a copy of the School's Complaints Policy will be sent to them by the Head/Bursar's PA.
- 2.13 The Head will ensure that a letter or email is sent to the parent/guardian within 10 working days* of receipt of their complaint, stating how the matter has been dealt with and what the outcome is. This should be uploaded to CPOMS by the Head's PA. This letter or email is necessary even if there have been meeting(s) or phone call(s) with the parent(s) on the subject of this complaint.
- 2.14 If the complaint is against any member of Exec, the matter should be addressed to the Head of Abbot's Hill School. If the complaint is against the Head, parents/guardians/should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted in confidence via the Clerk to the Governors at school. In either case, the complaint will follow the procedure set out in Stage 2.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 If the parent does not escalate their complaint in the manner laid down in this procedure within 10 working days, then the school will regard the complaint as closed.

2.17 A record of all relevant correspondence will be kept for a minimum of seven years, and copies sent to the Head's office. If the parent/guardian feels that an expression of concern has not been handled properly by a member of staff, they should contact the Head of Prep or Head.

3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

3.1 Parents/guardians/ whose complaint has not been resolved by the Stage 1 process, may escalate their complaint formally in writing to the Head within 5 working days* of the “closure” letter referred to in Stage 1.

3.2 The escalation letter should state clearly that the parents/guardians/ 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. If the school receives a complaint marked “formal” but the school has not been alerted to the issue previously, it will aim to follow Stage 1 of the process to see if the concern can be dealt with informally before escalating it to Stage 2.

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

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

3.5 The Head 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 Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents/guardians 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 Head's hope that this brings the complaint to a satisfactory closure. It will also advise that if the parent/guardian 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/guardian 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 a minimum of seven years.

4. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

4.1 If parents/guardians 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 Head's 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 Chair of the Governors will convene a Complaints Panel to review the decisions taken by the Head 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/guardians. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head 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/guardians/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/guardians 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/guardians the Head, 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 a minimum of seven years.

5. Recording and Reviewing

5.1 The Head 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 2021-2022 the number of formal complaints made to the school was 3.

6. *Working Days

6.1 Working days run from 8am to 5pm, 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 of the school/nursery.

6.4 If a parent/guardian 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/guardians/ 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 33, of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2021; where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; 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 7 years (or longer for safeguarding issues in line with latest ISI regulations, as amended from time to time) 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 seven 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/guardians 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

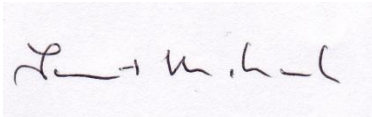
Ground Floor
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100 <http://www.isi.net>

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.

Signed

Issue Date: June 2022

Review Date: June 2023 or earlier if major change requires

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Janet Mark', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Janet Mark

Chairman of the Board of Governors