

Complaints Procedure

Scope

This policy is applicable to parents of all pupils in the school. There is a separate complaints procedure for parents of prospective pupils (see Admissions Procedure).

Any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is regarded as a complaint and thus within the scope of this policy. A complaint may be about any aspect of school life e.g. homework, marking and assessment, teaching in a lesson, behaviour, support and guidance, safety.

Availability

This Complaints procedure is available to all parents in the Handbook for Parents, on the School web site (www.abbotsholme.co.uk) and on request from school. Pupils have their version on Firefly.

Aim

Our aim is to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity. All complaints will be resolved with an outcome that balances the rights and duties of the pupils. Pupils will not be penalised when parents make a complaint in good faith.

We see our close links with parents and direct communications as a distinctive strength. The school, parents and pupils are working in partnership, towards the pupils' interests and welfare; that is the guiding principle behind our Complaints Procedure. The school places a high premium on mutual trust between school and parents.

Procedure

The procedure has an informal, formal and appeal stage, as set out below.

Most complaints are resolved informally but the procedure below clarifies the referral system and ensures that concerns are dealt with quickly and objectively. Staff are positively encouraged to resolve concerns at their level whilst keeping a record for future reference and ensuring that senior staff are kept informed and updated.

I. Informal stage

- (a) Parents are encouraged to contact a member of staff (teacher, tutor, house parent, etc.) directly, on an informal basis, to make a complaint or express a concern, explaining the concern and seeking an explanation or resolution. This may be over the telephone, face to face, through e-mail or in writing. The staff member will respond within 2 working days to say that they have received the concern. If not able to resolve the matter immediately, they will indicate a timescale, 5 working days. During the school holidays, the timescale may be longer, depending on whether relevant staff are available. If a parent has not had a response within the set time to an e-mail sent to or phone message left with a given member of staff, they should refer the complaint to a more senior member of staff or school reception.

- (b) If the parent is not content that the matter has been resolved appropriately, contact should be made (through any means), with a more senior member of staff, such as the line manager of the staff member (Head of Department, Head of Year, Houseparent, depending on the issue), or the Deputy Head, who will investigate and report back within 5 working days. The concern and answer will be recorded in writing by the line manager. A copy will be sent to the Deputy Head and a record of this maintained.

2. Formal Stage.

If the matter cannot be resolved at the informal stage, or the matter is regarded as sufficiently serious to warrant immediate treatment at this level, a complaint should be put in writing to the Headmaster, stating 'this is a formal complaint'. The Headmaster will investigate and answer the concern directly. He will reply within 5 working days. We hope that the vast majority of concerns will finally be resolved at this stage.

3. Appeal Stage (Panel Hearing)

If the parent is unhappy with the Headmaster's decision or feels that their concern is not resolved, he/she can write to the Headmaster requesting a panel hearing. The Chair of Governors will then make provision for a panel hearing to consider the complaint, within 14 working days. The panel consists of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of the panel is independent of the management and running of the school.

Parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied if they wish. The panel will make findings and recommendations and ensure the complainant, Governors, Headmaster and where relevant the person complained about is given a copy of them by post or electronic mail.

Where a parent is not satisfied with the school's response to their complaint at Stage 2, and indicate a wish to continue to Stage 3, for compliance purposes a panel hearing will take place unless the parent indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. The panel hearing will therefore proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel will consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings concerning the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

The panel will ensure that a copy be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster. This will be within 7 working days of the meeting.

Notwithstanding the staged approach above, parents are welcome to speak to the Deputy Head or Headmaster at any stage, particularly if the complaint is of a sensitive nature or particularly confidential.

Parents may also contact ISI or Ofsted for advice regarding complaints or with a complaint.

Recording and review of complaints

- All complaints will be confidential, in terms of correspondence, statements and records.
- Written records will be kept of complaints, whether they were resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

- Written records will be confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests to see them. (Section 108/109 of 2008 Education Act).
- Records will be made of action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, whether or not the complaint was upheld.
- Although replies to concerns/complaints will be prompt there may be a delay in the outcome, while the complaint is investigated and information gathered. We aim to resolve all matters within 28 working days.
- The Headmaster and the Chair of Governors regularly review records of complaints.
- Records of formal complaints will be kept for three years.
- For pupils in EYFS the record of complaints will be kept for three years. In general, all complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The complainant will be notified of the outcome within twenty-eight days. If a parent believes the school is not meeting EYFS requirements they may contact ISI or Ofsted. The school will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, a written record of all complaints and their outcome, made during a specified period.

Concerns about Fees

The procedure is as follows:

Contact the Finance Manager or the Head of Operations and register your concern. They will respond within 5 working days. Most complaints will be resolved at this level. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you should contact the Headmaster.

Concerns about School Transport

If your concern is about the charges or the level of service, the procedure is as follows:

Contact the Head of Operations and explain your complaint. He will respond within 72 hours. Most concerns will be resolved at this level. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you should contact the Headmaster.

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