

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

This policy concerns complaints from parents of current pupils.

The Queen's School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to the girls. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be handled by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. This policy also covers the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils at this school.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- We aim to resolve most complaints and concerns quickly and informally. All correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential and it is noted at which stage they were resolved (stage 1 or 2) or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (stage 3).
- If parents have a complaint or a concern they should normally contact their daughter's Class Teacher or Form Teacher. Our experience suggests that in many cases the matter can be resolved quickly to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher or Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Year, Head of Key Stage or a Head of Department if the issue relates to a specific subject in the Senior School, or Deputy Head or Head of Lower School if the issue relates to matters in the Lower School.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmistress or Deputy Head in the Senior School, or to the Deputy Head or Head of Lower School in the Lower School will usually be referred in the first instance to the form tutor or Head of Department, unless the Headmistress or Deputy Head in the Senior School, or the Head of Lower School consider it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Complaints should only be directed to the Chair of Governors if a complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of a parent utilising stage 1, 2 and 3 of this policy or in the case that the complaint is about the Headmistress.
- Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days or in the event that the Head of Key Stage and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress or the Head of Lower School. The Headmistress or the Head of Lower School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Under normal circumstances, the Headmistress or the Head of Lower School will speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. This will usually be within two working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmistress or the Head of Lower School to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmistress or the Head of Lower School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint or concern. Where the complaint or concern refers to a child in the EYFS the School will notify the complainant of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Records of the complaint or concern will be kept for 3 years (by the Lower School) and Ofsted/ ISI will be informed. Ofsted can be contacted at: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
- Once the Headmistress or the Head of Lower School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmistress or the Head of Lower School will also give reasons for her decision. This would normally be within 15 working days of the written complaint being received. Circumstances beyond the School's control, such as the COVID pandemic, may on occasion extend the response and investigation time beyond 15 working days, and complaints received during the School holiday period may take longer to address.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within 15 working days of receipt. The school will assume the matter is satisfactorily resolved if the matter does not proceed to stage 3 during this time frame.

Stage 3 – Referral to a Panel for Adjudication

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

- If parents wish to refer their complaint to the Board of Governors (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should put their complaint in writing to the Panel for Adjudication via the Clerk to the Governors.
- The Panel will consist of one of the Vice Chairs of Governors, a further member of the governing body and a person who is independent of the management of the school. This person would not necessarily need to have an educational background but should be able to make a reasonable judgement. All members of the Panel will not have been previously directly involved in resolving this issue. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working school days of receiving the complaint in order to allow time for a full investigation to take place.
- 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- A friend or relative may accompany parents to the hearing. The meeting does not constitute legal proceedings and so legal representation is not appropriate. The Clerk to the Governors must be given 7 working days' notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified. The parents should note that the Panel will want to speak to the parents directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
- The panel hearing should proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend, for instance, because they are satisfied and do not wish to proceed further with a panel hearing. If necessary, the panel should consider the parents' complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on 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.
- After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Clerk will write to the parents informing them of the Panel's decision and the reasons for it, normally within 5 working days. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Headmistress or the Head of Lower School, the governing body and, where relevant, the person who has been complained about. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be sent or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and will be

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmistress or Head of Lower School and governors.

- The School will respond to any actions that are recommended by the Panel or Headmistress as a result of any complaint.

Retention and Review of Records

The School will keep a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and resolved. This record will note whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing; and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential to the School except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Records of complaints not linked to safeguarding will be retained for a minimum period of 7 years, and for a minimum of 10 years where there are safeguarding concerns.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the school year 2019/20 was 1.

Regular reviews of complaints are conducted by the Senior Leadership team. The purpose of this is to look beyond any one individual complaint to ensure it doesn't represent a deeper problem that needs to be remediated

Complaints against a Governor including the Chair of Governors

Parents who wish to make a complaint against a Governor or the Chair of Governors should put their complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Governors.

Complaints against the Headmistress

Parents who wish to make a complaint against the Headmistress should write directly to the Chair of Governors.