



PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. This policy is a 'Whole School Policy' and informs practice in the Senior School, Prep School and Nursery. Battle Abbey School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be seriously treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

2. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or the Head before returning to the parent.

3. Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Form Teacher will usually be referred to the Head unless the recipient of the complaint deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. The recipient of the complaint will make a written record for the child's file of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days (or 2 weeks during a holiday), or in the event that the Head 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. Copies of all notes and correspondence on each complaint are to be copied to a central complaints file.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

4. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the formal complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

5. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Head 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 within 7 working days (or 2 weeks during a holiday). The Head will also give reasons for his decision. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

6. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Bursar (Clerk to the Governors) who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least 3 governors or other people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent to the management and running of the School. The Chair of

the Governors shall appoint each of the Panel members. The Chair of the Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 7 working days. The Panel will only consider matters that were raised as part of the original complaint to the Head.

7. 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. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by a maximum of 2 other persons. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

8. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The Bursar will retain copies of all the paperwork for inspection when required at the School. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents have the option of complaining to OFSTED or the ISI should they wish. Contact details are www.ofsted.gov.uk/parents (phone - 0300 123 1231) and www.isi.net/home (phone - 0207 600 0100). A record of all written complaints, the action taken, regardless of whether they are upheld, and the outcome is held by the School and is kept for 3 years. All written complaints will be investigated and the complainants notified of the outcome of any investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint.

9. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential 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. The written record will state whether the complaint has been resolved at the preliminary stage (ie informal resolution), stage 2 (formal resolution) or stage 3 (Panel hearing).

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE HEAD

10. In the rare event that a parent wishes to make a formal complaint against the Head, he/she should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Bursar. The Chair of Governors will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If necessary, the Chair will meet with the parents concerned, normally within 7 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

11. It may be necessary for the Chair to carry out further investigations and if so, he will appoint another governor to investigate and report back in writing within 14 working days. Once the Chair 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 Chair will also give reasons for the decision. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE PARENTS OF BOARDERS

12. Boarders' parents are requested to note the following additional points:

- All staff are aware of this policy.
- All boarding parents and pupils have a complaints procedure that they can follow, which is given to them in writing.
- All boarding parents and pupils are informed in their Handbooks of how to contact Ofsted and the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- All complaints will be dealt with, without unreasonable delay.

- A written record of all complaints and their outcomes are available for inspection by the Head or senior member of staff.
- Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- If parents are dissatisfied with the result of the action taken by the Head of Boarding, they may appeal to the Head, who will follow the guidelines for handling all complaints, above.

The school's written record of complaints separately identifies complaints relating to boarding provision and the action taken by the School as a result of those complaints regardless of whether the complaints are upheld.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE PARENTS OF NURSERY AND RECEPTION PUPILS

13. Parents of Nursery and Reception pupils are requested to note the following additional points:
- Additional requirements apply for EYFS settings beyond those which apply to the main school. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
 - Providers must make available details of how to contact Ofsted, and / or ISI, if parents believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements (contact details are at para 9 above).

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

14. With effect from 1st October 2015, schools are required by The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 ('the ADR Regulations') to provide parents at the conclusion of Stage 3 of the complaints procedure with the name and address of a certified alternative dispute resolution ('ADR') entity (such as a mediation or arbitration body) which would be competent to deal with any unresolved dispute, should the School and parents both wish to engage in Alternative Dispute Resolution. However, it should be noted the School is not obliged to enter into such a process.

This policy was reviewed by the Full Court on 16 Nov 18 in accordance with Part 7 of the Independent Schools Inspectorate's Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements (Sep 18).

During the academic year 2017 – 18, 3 complaints were dealt with under Stage 2 and / or Stage 3.



J Dunn, Chair of Governors