

THE SCHOOL

PARENT WORRIES AND COMPLAINTS

"Our" School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient

way

- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we take action where appropriate.

"How should I complain?"

When you contact the school ask to speak to a member of staff with whom you feel comfortable. Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue - for example, to raise House matters with the Housemaster or sports concerns with the Sportsmaster. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss.

However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

"I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me"

The school is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

"I am not sure whether to complain or not."

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should the contact the school, as we are here to help.

"What will happen next?"

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within five working days, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issue is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

"What happens about confidentiality?"

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chairman of the School Council may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it become necessary to refer matters to the Police. You would be fully informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we

would point out that anonymous complaints might not be pursued.

Action, which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints, would be handled confidentially within the school.

"What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?"

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Chairman of the School Council. Alternatively, you may wish to write direct to the Chairman. The Chairman will call for a full report from the Principal, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a positive solution, but if it does not, the Chairman will invite you to a meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If the meeting does not bring about a resolution, the matter would be referred to the school's Conciliation Committee. It is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Committee Convenor will invite you to a meeting. You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. As with the Chairman's meeting, you will be invited to bring a friend with you.

The school recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The principles that apply to parental complaints should also be applied to complaints and concerns from pupils.

There are, however, differences in approaches. One important difference from the handling of parental complaints is that pupils should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, whether it is the form teacher, a member of the support staff, the Housemaster or the School Counsellor.

In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, the outcome should be discussed with the pupil by a member of staff. To make sure that it is fully understood, a written record may be shared.

Complaints that appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, such as bullying.

If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another pupil or from an adult. Students should be encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.

Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, also need to be explained to pupils. Personal and Social Education programs can be of use, not only in teaching pupils how they may support and act as mentors to others, but also in encouraging them to understand that their views matter. All students are provided with a copy of the following guidelines for making complaints and expressing concerns in their School Diary:

STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?

If so, the school would like to hear .

How do I make a complaint?

- By talking about it- or by writing it down if you find that easier .
- You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

To Whom?

- To anyone on staff.

Does it matter what the issue is?

- No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

What will happen next?

- If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

Do others have to know?

- If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff they will understand.

Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry - it will only be discussed by staff who can help you.

