

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction:

Northwood Prep. 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 treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. There is a Parents' Complaints Form, in a leaflet format, which summarises this policy document.

This policy applies to the EYFS (including the Wrap-around Care), the Junior School and the Senior School of Northwood Prep.

Confidentiality:

Complaints or concerns will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited, as far as is possible, to the Head and those directly involved. The Chair of Governors 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 became 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 may 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.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher, or member of staff concerned, cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult more senior members of staff or the Head.

Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher, or the member of staff most closely concerned with the issue, unless the Head deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Teacher or appropriate member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days or in the event that the member of staff 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

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 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.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigation or to refer the matter to the Chair of Governors.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint for at least three years.

The Head will provide Ofsted and ISI, if requested, with a written record of all complaints made during a specified period, and action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. 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

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of 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 three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one person will be independent of the management and the running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors, who on behalf of the

Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days.

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 7 working days prior to the hearing.

The parents 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.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents (where possible, a copy will also be sent by e-mail) informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 28 days of having received the complaint. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. Those findings are available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School keeps a written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel Hearing. A record of complaints is kept for at least 3 years.

All correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Should any aspect of the complaints' procedure remain unresolved, it is possible for parents to bring such matters to the attention of Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.

These organisations may be contacted at:

www.ofsted.gov.uk

www.isi.net

Policy reviewed: January 2010 SLT/SMN

Date of next Review: January 2011