



# Hopelands Preparatory School

38/40 Regent Street, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2AD

## Complaints Procedure

### Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the school including the EYFS.

### Introduction

Hopelands Preparatory 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 treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Hopelands makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and Hopelands will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 24(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Hopelands will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. The school will keep a written record of action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

### **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/daughter's form tutor or subject teacher. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff concerned cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant tutor or teacher unless he or she deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The Head 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 Head and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors

### **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 speak to 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 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. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision. This will take place within 7 working days of the complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- This stage will be completed in 14 working days.

### **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 three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Convenor, 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 normally not later than 7 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Head.
- The recommendations will be made available on school premises for inspection

### **EYFS**

If parents believe the School is not meeting the EYFS welfare and safety requirements they should discuss this with the Head of EYFS, who will inform the Head. If the complaint is not resolved the Head should be informed in writing and the complaint will be investigated within twenty-eight days of the complaint being received.

Parents may also contact Ofsted on 0300 123 1231 or 0300 123 4666 between the hours of 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, or Independent Schools Inspectorate on 020 7600 0100 if the complaint refers to the EYFS requirements.

## **Appendix**

Definition of a working day is any day of the week except Saturday, Sunday and public holidays in England.

### Complaints Procedure - Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfE to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant.

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background - perhaps retired members of the Police Force - might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

This was expanded in the DfE's Registration of Independent Schools Information Pack of July 2011:

Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views.

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[1] The Regulations stipulate that the complaints procedure must set out clear timescales for the management of a complaint. These should therefore be stated. The timescale is, however, at the discretion of schools, but too protracted a period (say, more than a month) is likely to appear unreasonable to complainants. EYFS providers - must investigate all written complaints relating to the requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS, and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days of having received the complaint.

[2] Schools will need to consider the appropriate position for inclusion here.

[3] Schools should amend references to 'governors' in the policy as necessary to reflect the correct terminology for their governing body.


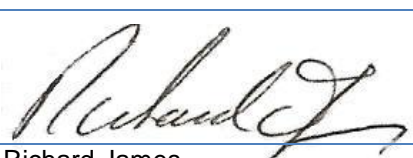
[4] Schools will need to consider who would be appropriate to undertake an impartial investigation, what form of evidence would be most appropriate, who should be sent the investigator's written report at the conclusion of the investigation and what the timescale should be for the investigation.

[5] The ISC obtained guidance from the DfE on how schools should go about finding such an independent person (see Appendix). The panel should be appointed by or on behalf of "the proprietor" of the School (usually the governors/trustees).

**Parents can contact either Ofsted or ISI directly, if they so wish. The contact details are:**

Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) CAP House 9 - 12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA  Telephone 020 7600 0100	Ofsted Royal Exchange Buildings St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA  e-mail: <a href="mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk">enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 08456 014772
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The number of formal complaints in the previous academic year 2015-16 were 2.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	Hopelands Preparatory School
Held on	<u>June 2017</u>
Date to be reviewed	<u>June 2018</u>
Signed on behalf of the senior management team	
Name of signatory	<u>Sheila Bradburn</u>
Role of signatory	<u>Head</u>
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body	
Name of signatory	<u>Richard James</u>
Role of signatory	<u>Chair of Governors</u>