

The Complaints Policy and Procedure

As part of the general home/school policy, parents and pupils are encouraged to express their views on what goes on within school, so that staff receive an early warning of potential difficulties and problems can be prevented from arising whenever possible.

If You Have a Concern or Complaint

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that has happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's Form Tutor. Any teacher or the School Secretary can help you find the right member of staff. If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the Head in the first instance, you can contact him straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this and can make one by ringing or calling in to the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you so wish.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

Certain general underlying principles are observed whenever concerns or complaints are raised.

1 Awareness

Parents always know how they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint.

A summary of how the school deals with complaints is included in the information that is given to new parents when their children join the school, and in the information given to the children themselves. Existing parents and pupils are reminded of the system at regular intervals.

2 Procedures are carried out as speedily as possible – consistent with fairness to all concerned

Each stage of the procedure has known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, information about progress is given to the complainant. Care is taken not to drag things out with unnecessary bureaucracy.

3 Support for Complainant

Parents raising concerns or complaints are invited to be accompanied by a friend, a relative or a representative at any stage of the procedure.

4 Support for a Person Complained Against

Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure investigation must feel they are being treated in a fair way and they too have an opportunity to put their case. They are told about the procedure and are kept informed of progress. There is a crucial balance to be maintained between supporting the individual so that his/her rights and reputation are protected and investigating a complaint thoroughly and impartially.

The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff. There may be occasions where a complaint launches a disciplinary procedure that puts the complaints procedure on hold. If so, the complainant is informed of this and any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint is dealt with by the usual complaints procedures; the complainant is “up-dated” every three weeks on the likely further delay.

5 Confidentiality

It is very important to treat conversations and correspondence with discretion. It is vitally important that parents feel confident that their complaint will not penalise their child. However, from the outset all parties to a complaint will need to be aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaint procedure.

6 Redress

If the outcome of the complaint procedure shows the school is at fault, it is often sufficient to provide redress in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of: an apology, an explanation, a promise that the event complained of will not recur, an undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint, or, in appropriate circumstances, financial compensation.

7 Staff Awareness and Training

School staff, including non-teaching staff, are familiar with the procedures so that they can advise parents about their operation. Potentially all staff are involved in handling complaints, especially at the informal level. Their confidence in doing so depends on their having clear information about the procedures, reassurances that senior staff are committed to the procedures and some basic training in the practical interpersonal skills needed in dealing with people who are upset or angry. All school staff have clear information about which staff have which responsibilities at school so that parents do not get continually passed from one to another.

8 Record Keeping

Complaints are recorded and monitored termly by the Head.

Recording begins at the point when a concern or initial complaint has become the kind of complaint that can not be resolved on the spot but needs investigation and/or consultation with others in the school and will require a later report back (either orally or in writing) to the parent.

Recording at the earliest stages is only a very basic record of the complaint, giving the date, name of parent and general nature of the complaint. A complaints book is used.

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Canbury 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 in accordance with this Procedure.

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 straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Subject Teacher unless the Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor or Subject Teacher 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 10 working days or in the event that the Form Tutor or Subject Teacher 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 10 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 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 Bursar who has been appointed by the Governors to call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Bursar, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 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 5 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations to be completed within 5 working 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, its recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint. The findings will also be available for inspection at the School.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulation 2003, by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal authority.

Complaints during the previous year: None.