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# Complaints Procedure – Parents

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## Revision and Terminology

Please refer to the Policies Review Schedule, or in line with any changes in regulations.

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## Introduction

### 1. **The purpose of the procedure**

- The aim of this procedure is to achieve a fair, effective and as rapid as possible resolution of parental concerns about the education and/or welfare of individual student in the care of the School.
- \*The expression 'parents' is used for those having parental responsibility for the child.
- These procedures apply to all parents of students and to prospective parents of the School. A copy of this procedure is available on the School website and can also be obtained on request from the School office.

### 2. **Time-Limits**

Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

### 3. **Professional judgement**

Where the judgement of the Head of School is subject to complaint, the Complaints Panel will determine whether the judgement was exercised fairly and reasonably according to the standards. There may be more than one fair and reasonable response to a situation. Accordingly, where a complaint is upheld, the Complaints Panel will usually make recommendations to be acted upon by the School.

### 4. **Legal proceedings**

Where legal proceedings exist between the School and the parents/student, this procedure may be subject to the constraints of the legal process.

### 5. **Record keeping**

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 109 of the 2008 Act or where any other legal obligation prevails.

### 6. **Framework of Principles**

An effective Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;

- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the School's senior management team so that services can be improved.

## **7. Investigating Complaints**

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator), makes sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

## **8. Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure Teikyo will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;

- an undertaking to review School policies in light of the complaint.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the School could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

### **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 student's home teacher/boarding staff, as appropriate. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with other staff within the School.
- The staff will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 School 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 of School as soon as possible.

The Head of School will investigate the complaint.

The Head of School will respond to the parents usually within 10 School days. Parents should note that there are times when the response will be longer e.g. when key staff or students are absent. In particularly complex cases, the Head of School will advise parents of any extra time needed to properly investigate.

- The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The School will also keep a written record of complaints and of whether they were resolved at this preliminary stage or proceeded to a Panel hearing.
- Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.

- If parents are not satisfied with the Head of School's response, the parents should write within 10 working days of the Head of School's response to the Complaints Panel. Where the complaint is against the decision of an external agency or third party, such as an examination board or higher education institution, parents will be advised on the appropriate route for their complaint and, where possible, given information and advice about progressing their concerns.
- Complaints about the Head of School should be made directly to the Complaints Panel.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If the complaint is about the Head of School, the parents should write directly to the Complaints Panel (c/o Teikyo Foundation, Framewood Road, Wexham, Buckinghamshire, SL2 4QS, U.K.). The complaint should clearly identify the main issue(s) of concern, and, if possible, indicate the nature of the resolution that they are seeking.
- If parents wish to have their complaint considered at a Panel Hearing, they should write to the Complaints Panel setting out their complaint.
- If a complaint is made to the Complaints Panel before a formal complaint has been made to the Head of School, then the Chairman of the Complaints Panel may refer the matter to the Head of School for resolution.
- In the interests of resolving the complaint expeditiously, complaints should focus on the main issues. It is helpful if the complaint is able to indicate the nature of the outcome which they are seeking as a means of resolving their complaint.
- The Chairman will then convene a Complaints Panel. The Panel will include at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint or involved with the School, as well as a member who is independent of the management and running of the School.
- A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practical and normally within 25 School days of receipt of the parents' letter.
- The parents will be given reasonable notice of the Panel Hearing, normally no less than 10 School days prior to the hearing.
- 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 the Proprietor not less than seven School days prior to the hearing, for circulation to all parties.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The parent should advise the Panel no less than seven School days prior to the hearing the name, relationship (if any) and status (professional and occupational) of the accompanying person.

- After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents normally within five working days informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel findings, and (if any) recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Head of School and, where relevant, the person(s) against whom the complaint was made.
- The findings and recommendations referred to may be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. They will be available for inspection on the School premises by the proprietor and by the Head of School.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and of action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.
- On the issuance of the Panel's decision this procedure is concluded.

#### **9. Conclusion of the procedure**

Both the School and the Panel will do their best to ensure that all complaints and concerns are resolved effectively. However, it is not always possible to accommodate parents' requests. In some cases, we may not be able to reach the final agreement.

Repeated parental complaints will result in spending a great deal of time and effort by the School and the Panel. This can become an obstacle to School educational activities and may result in impacting on other students in a negative way. Therefore, once the Panel is satisfied with the final decision, we reserve the right to conclude the procedure and further correspondences (including meeting, letter, email, and telephone) on the matter.

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 where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.