

6.8 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

Leweston School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if current parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedure. (Parents of past pupils will receive a response to any concerns they raise but the following procedure does not apply). The policy is available for all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and Leweston School will ensure that any parent or prospective parent who requests it, is made aware that this document is available to download from the website or that a hard copy can be requested from the Academic Administrator.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Leweston School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, 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 however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff; any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure including a decision to exclude a pupil. 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. A formal complaint is defined as one which has not been resolved at the first stage by direct contact with school staff, and is then made in writing or received by email to a senior member of staff or the Head; it immediately becomes a formal complaint and goes to stage 2.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that no child will be penalised for a complaint raised by a parent or child in good faith.

Three Stage Complaints 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, at the earliest possible opportunity, raise the matter initially with the Houseparent, Head of Year or Form Tutor in the Senior School, the Houseparent or Year Teacher in the Prep School and the Key Worker in the Nursery. If this member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult other senior staff.

Complaints made directly in the first instance to Heads of Department, the Head of Early Years in the Nursery, Head of Leweston Prep, the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Houseparent, Head of Year, Form Tutor, Year Teacher, or Key Worker unless the Head of Department, Deputy Head or Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The Houseparent, Head of Year, Form Tutor, Year Teacher or Key Worker will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were communicated to the School. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the staff member 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.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair 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 meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter within five working days of receiving the complaint (or if the Head is absent from school, within five days of his/her return). If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may however 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 within 10 working days of the completion of the investigation. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair 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 within 10 working days of the completion of the investigation. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Deputy 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 persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; two will be Governors and one will be independent of the management and running of the school. For clarity, the independent person cannot be a current or past employee, a current or past governor, a current or recent past parent, or a current or recent past pupil. The Deputy Chair of Governors, on behalf of the panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 15 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 five 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. Legal representation is not permitted. The panel hearing will proceed unless the parents confirm in writing that they are satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If the parents decide not to attend the panel hearing, the panel will consider the parents' complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint in order to bring the matter to a conclusion.

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 and, if necessary, appoint an investigator.

After due consideration of all facts that the Panel considers to be 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, within 10 working days of the hearing (unless further investigation is required, in which case additional time will be required). The decision of the Panel is final.

A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent in writing to the parents and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint has been made, as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The timelines set out above are in working days. A working day is defined as a Monday to Friday during term time.

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively and they will be acknowledged within five 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 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing, and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was 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 and whether boarder or day
- 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 request access to them.

Leweston School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years. All complaints relating to the fulfilment of our EYFS requirements will be fully investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome of any complaint within 28 days.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by e-mail: concerns@isi.net

Annual Summary of Concerns and Complaints

In the academic year 2021-2022 all concerns and complaints were resolved informally at Stage 1 with the exception of one complaint which was resolved satisfactorily at Stage 2.

Author: Bursar

Last Review: August 2023

Next Review: August 2024