



Boarding House Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

We believe that the Boarding House provides a caring and positive environment for all our children, and that the Houseparent and other staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

If any parent is unhappy with the care that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the Houseparent (Mrs Charlotte Oshinsky) or a member of the House staff immediately. All boarding staff are trained in the complaints procedure as part of induction and ongoing safeguarding training. Any complaint that indicates a potential safeguarding concern will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Charlotte Oshinsky) or the Headmaster immediately and handled in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

2. Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response. The Boarding House will endeavour to deal with complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, and where appropriate, will take action. The relevant timescales are listed clearly below. It is the school's policy that complaints should not rebound on the children. Pupils themselves are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith. Boarders receive age-appropriate guidance on how to raise concerns or complaints, including anonymous options, and are reminded regularly that they will be listened to without fear of reprisal. The school ensures that all complaints are handled fairly, transparently, and without discrimination, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The complainant can refer their complaint to ISI who can be contacted regarding concerns about a school on:

Tel. 020 7710 9900 concerns@isi.net

OFSTED's contact details are:

OFSTED
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 014772

The School will provide Ofsted/ISI 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.

3. The complaints process

Stage One: Informal resolution

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the care that we are providing in the House, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Houseparent (Mrs Charlotte Oshinsky). Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All of the House staff work hard to ensure that each boarder is happy in the House and sees Boarding as a positive experience; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's wellbeing.

Complaints about Boarding made directly to a member of the school's senior management team will usually be referred to the Houseparent (Mrs Charlotte Oshinsky) unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The Houseparent (or Headmaster), will make a written note (dated) of any parental concerns or complaints. Once communicated, a complaint will be responded to within three working days. If more time is needed, that will be explained within that time frame.

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the Houseparent, the Houseparent and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution or their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage Two – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster who will arrange for them to make an appointment to discuss the matter. The Headmaster considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage. The Headmaster will **keep written records** of all actions and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. Normally no complaint dealt with at any level below the Local Governing Body (LGB) should remain unresolved for longer than five working days. When resolution will take longer than this, the parent must be kept informed and told why.

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

Should a parent have a complaint about the Headmaster, s/he should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the LGB, who is obliged to investigate it within one working week. The LGB member in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint involving a panel hearing, as outlined below.

Stage Three: Panel Hearing

If an informal complaint and subsequent discussions have failed to resolve an issue, then a formal complaint should be made to the LGB. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and the actions of the school so far. This written complaint should be sent to the Chairman of the LGB, who will convene a complaints panel.

The complaints panel, represented by no fewer than two LGB members (neither of whom is involved in the matter under investigation) and one other person independent of the management and running of the school, must consider all written complaints within a maximum of three working weeks. A meeting will be arranged to discuss the complaint; the panel will give the parents at least three days' notice of the meeting, allowing for parents to attend the meeting and be accompanied at the meeting if they so wish.

After hearing all the evidence, including that gathered through further investigation, should it be necessary, the panel will consider their findings and will reach a decision. They may make recommendations. This process will be completed within 7 days of the hearing. The Panel's findings, their reasons and any recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, LGB and, where relevant, the person complained about. The LGB does all it can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

In addition to the procedures above:

- This policy is available to all staff and boarders;
- Boarders and their parents are informed how to contact ISI regarding Boarding welfare and this information is displayed prominently around the school.
- Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith;
- All written records of complaints are reviewed annually by both the Headmaster and the Chairman of LGB;
- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils;
- Complaints relating to Boarding will be clearly identified as such in records.

In the last academic year, no complaints were taken forward to the panel stage.

Appendix: Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has supplied the following guidance in a letter to the ISC General Secretary:

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.

At all stages, a written record is to be kept by the school of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing. Records of complaints are stored securely and retained for at least seven years in line with the school's Data Protection Policy. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the 2002 Education Act requests access to them.