



Complaints (Senior School) Policy

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Description: This policy outlines the Senior School's approach to handling complaints.

OUR SCHOOL AIMS

- ❖ *To foster intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.*
- ❖ *To achieve high academic standards in a supportive but disciplined atmosphere.*
- ❖ *To equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world.*
- ❖ *To instill an enthusiasm in interests and opportunities beyond the classroom.*
- ❖ *To support pupils' development of a sense of justice and an awareness of their rights and responsibilities as global citizens.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The School (Lingfield College, Lingfield College Prep, Lingfield College Nursery, Lingfield College Sixth Form) is proud of the rounded education that it provides to its pupils, and welcomes regular contact from parents on a huge range of subjects, ranging from logistical questions to those focused on more strategic approaches. Parents form a fundamental part of the School's community and feedback from them is taken on board and acted on where appropriate. This policy is designed so that parents of pupils can understand how a complaint will be treated by the school.
- 1.2 Time scales referred to within this policy are intended for guidance principally during school term time. During school holidays it may not be practical to meet these deadlines.
- 1.3 Most complaints are dealt with swiftly on an informal basis, but the purpose of the Complaints Policy is to establish the three-part procedure by which more serious complaints can be made by parents or pupils and how they are managed by the School.
- 1.4 In accordance with the Independent School Standards, Lingfield College will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- 1.5 The School will also 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.



- 1.6 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem that stems from something that the Parent feels either should have been done or has not been done to their satisfaction. A complaint could also be made about the School acting unfairly in some way. It could focus on the School as a whole, a particular department or an individual member of Staff.

2.0 TIMEFRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- 2.1 All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. 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 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.
- 2.2 Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

3.0 CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDING

- 3.1 Any formal complaint made to the School by a parent is treated seriously and confidentially. No student will be penalised for a complaint made by their parent(s) in good faith.
- 3.2 The School keeps written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to a formal (Stage 2) complaint and maintains a Register of Complaints, recording the date of a complaint, summarised details of the complaint, and the date and manner of its resolution, together with information of any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld). Details are logged to indicate whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or went to a Stage 3 Panel Hearing.
- 3.3 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential in so far as is required of the School except where a body conducting an inspection requests that they are provided under Section 164 (5)(b) of the Education Act 2002. [Part 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standard) Regulations]

The Three-Part Procedure for Resolution

4.0 STAGE 1 – THE INFORMAL RESOLUTION PROCESS

- 4.1 The School will seek to resolve complaints quickly and informally wherever possible. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away to the Parents' satisfaction by Tutors, Heads of Year, Heads of Department, Assistant Heads or Deputy Heads. If the Parents consider the complaint to be of a serious nature they are advised to put it in writing – see Stage 2 below.
- 4.2 Who to Contact with an Informal Complaint:
- **Academic Matters:** If the complaint relates to the classroom, the curriculum or Special Educational Needs, it should be discussed with the child's Tutor in the first instance. The Tutor will then help the Parents to put their concerns to the appropriate Head of Department or the SENDCo. He/she may also refer it to the Deputy Head (Academic).
 - **Pastoral Matters:** If the concern relates to a matter outside the classroom or any welfare issue, this should be raised with the Tutor, who will refer it to the relevant Head of Year and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) if deemed necessary.



- **Disciplinary Matters:** A concern about disciplinary sanctions should be first raised with the Tutor, who will discuss the situation with the member of staff who imposed the sanction. If not resolved, the concern should be put in writing / email to the Head of Year who may raise the issue with the Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- **Financial Matters:** A concern or complaint about matters relating to fees or extras should be put in writing to the Finance Manager. If this is not resolved promptly, a copy of the letter of complaint should be sent to the Headmaster.

4.3 A written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received, will be kept by the School. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days, or in the event that the Year Head, Deputy Head or Finance Manager 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.

5.0 STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION PROCESS

- 5.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster, expressing their continuing concerns following the informal discussions held in Stage 1 of this procedure. They should make it clear that they intend to escalate the matter to a formal stage. The Headmaster will decide on the appropriate course of action, having considered the issue at length.
- 5.2 In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the Parents concerned to discuss the matter within seven working days of receiving the written complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 5.3 It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- 5.4 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 the decision.
- 5.5 If Parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should write to the Chair of Governors, who may recommend Stage 3 of this procedure.

6.0 STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

- 6.1 If Parents seek to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they will be referred to the Chairman of the Board of Governors who, amongst other responsibilities, ~~would~~ may decide to call a hearing of the Complaints Panel when necessary.
- 6.2 The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons selected by the Board of Governors who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chairman of the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within twenty-one working days of the complaint being referred to her.
- 6.3 If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details 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 seven working days prior to the Hearing.



- 6.4 The Parents may be accompanied at the Hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 6.5 The Headmaster will not be present at the hearing, but may be invited to meet the Panel afterwards, before they reach their decision.
- 6.6 At the hearing, the Panel may consider evidence from any person who was involved in the decision under discussion and any relevant documents pertaining to this decision.
- 6.7 If possible, the Panel will resolve the Parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 6.8 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations which it shall implement within seven working days of the hearing.
- 6.9 The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within seven working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- 6.10 The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the Parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was raised. The findings and recommendations made by the Panel are available for inspection on school premises by the Headmaster and the Chairman of Governors.

Last reviewed September 2019

Next review due September 2020