



**SEDBERGH SCHOOL
AND
CASTERTON, SEDBERGH PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

Complaints Procedure	
Version	2018.1
Effective from	August 2018
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Policy Owner	Bursar
Governor	Jeremy Bedford
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Introduction

Sedbergh School, Casterton Sedbergh Prep School and the Mulberry Bush Nursery (the 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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, **the 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 with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

The 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 normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher (at the prep school) or Housemaster/Housemistress (HSM) or relevant Head of Department (HoD) (at senior school). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher or HSM/HoD cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a HoD, Deputy Head or the Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department. Deputy Head or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher or HSM unless the HoD, Deputy Head or Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher or HSM 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 15/fifteen working days** or in the event that the Form Teacher or HSM 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 Complaints Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster of the senior or prep school parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors. A complaint against the Principal should be made directly to the Chairman 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 Headmaster (senior or prep as applicable). The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, **within 5/five 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will **keep written records** of all meetings 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.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Principal will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Principal 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 Principal 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. The Principal will give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal 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. The Chairman will give reasons for his 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 Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel (the Convenor).
- **The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School.** The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place **within 10/ten 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/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 will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 facts they consider 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 5/five working days of the hearing** (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. **A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Principal. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Principal.**

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5/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.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

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 is 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
- 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 requests access to them.

The 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.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Ofsted and the ISI can be contacted as follows:

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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

Procedural flowchart

