



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

Complaints Procedure	
Version	2021.1
Effective from	September 2021
Extent of Policy	Sedbergh School Casterton, Sedbergh Prep School The Mulberry Bush at Casterton
Policy Owner	Headmaster, Sedbergh School, & Chief Operating Officer
Governor	Jeremy Bedford
Review by	September 2022
Frequency of Audit	Annual
Circulation	Parents by request
Publication	Website

Introduction

Sedbergh School ("the senior school"), Casterton, Sedbergh Prep School ("the prep school") and the Mulberry Bush at Casterton (collectively "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 parent(s)/guardian(s) 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/guardians 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, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.** This information may be sought from the Clerk to the Governors, Peter Marshall, at the following address –

Sedbergh School
Statin Road
Sedbergh
LA10 5HG
Email: coo@sedberghschool.org

Scope and Application

This policy applies to the whole School including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

This policy applies only to complaints by parents. The School has separate Grievance and Whistleblowing Policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.

This policy does not apply to exclusions, to which the School's Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy applies.

This policy applies to complaints from each of the following:

- a parent or parents of current pupils; and
- a parent or parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

Please note that, for the purposes of this Complaints Procedure, the term "parent(s)" includes all those who have signed the School's acceptance form as well as those who hold parental responsibility for or have care of a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is a complaint and within the scope of this Complaints Procedure. Complaints may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff and may arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

The number of complaints received under the formal procedure in the previous academic year is available on request from the Clerk to the Governors

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 efficiently and promptly and, wherever possible, on an informal basis. Parents should raise a complaint, whenever possible, within three months of the incident. Although the School will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe (within twelve months) if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 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) or Head of Year (HoY) (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 or Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to a HoD, HoY, Deputy Head or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher or HSM unless the HoD, HoY, Deputy Head or Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher, HSM or HoD 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 5/five working days** or in the event that the Form Teacher, HSM, HoD or HoY 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 prep school or the Chief Operating Officer (COO), parents should make their complaint directly to the Headmaster, Sedbergh School. A complaint against the Headmaster, Sedbergh School should be made directly to the Chairman of Governors. Contact details for the Chairman of Governors are available from the School Office on request.

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 of the senior school or the prep school as applicable. The complaint should include should include the complainant's name and full contact details; details of the complaint and who it has previously been raised with; a copy of any relevant documents; and the outcome desired.
- 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, **normally 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, or their nominee, 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 of the prep school or the COO, the Headmaster, Sedbergh School, will call for a full report from the Headmaster of the prep school or the COO, as applicable, and for all of the relevant documents. The Headmaster, Sedbergh School, 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 Headmaster, Sedbergh School, 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 Headmaster, Sedbergh School, will give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is made against the Headmaster, Sedbergh School, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster, Sedbergh School, and for all of 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.
- The parents will be notified by email or letter of the Stage 2 decision, and the reasons for it, usually within **15/fifteen working days** from receipt of the formal complaint.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision reached under Stage 2, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure (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 ("the 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 send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the hearing, **normally within 10/ten working days of the date of the request to invoke Stage 3.**

- Copies of any additional documents that the parent(s) wishes the Panel to consider should be sent to the Convenor to be received at least **7/seven working 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 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 and the parents should note that the Panel will wish to speak to them directly. If they are accompanied by a legally qualified person, that person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
- **The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.**
- 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 the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the parties, the Panel will review the process and the decision reached at Stage 2, and consider on the balance of probabilities, whether or not to uphold each complaint.
- The Panel will make findings about each complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents, although the complaints panel may make recommendations about these issues.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **normally 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 Headmaster, Sedbergh School. **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 Headmaster, Sedbergh School.**

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and confidentially. They will be usually 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 aims to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 20 working days**. Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, will normally be completed within a **further 15 working days**.

Complaints relating to the fulfilment of the School's EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainants will be notified of the outcome within **28 days** of the School's receipt of the complaint.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, the term "**working days**" refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. The dates of School terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays due to intervening School holidays, the School's approach is to take sensible and reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

Recording Complaints and the Use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including 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).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice which is available on the School's website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information. This may include 'special category personal data' (please see the School's Privacy Notice which explains how the School uses such personal data), where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a period of at least seven years (a period determined by the six-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances).

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.

Complaints about the School's EYFS Provision

The School will investigate any written complaints relating to its EYFS provision and the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and will notify the complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

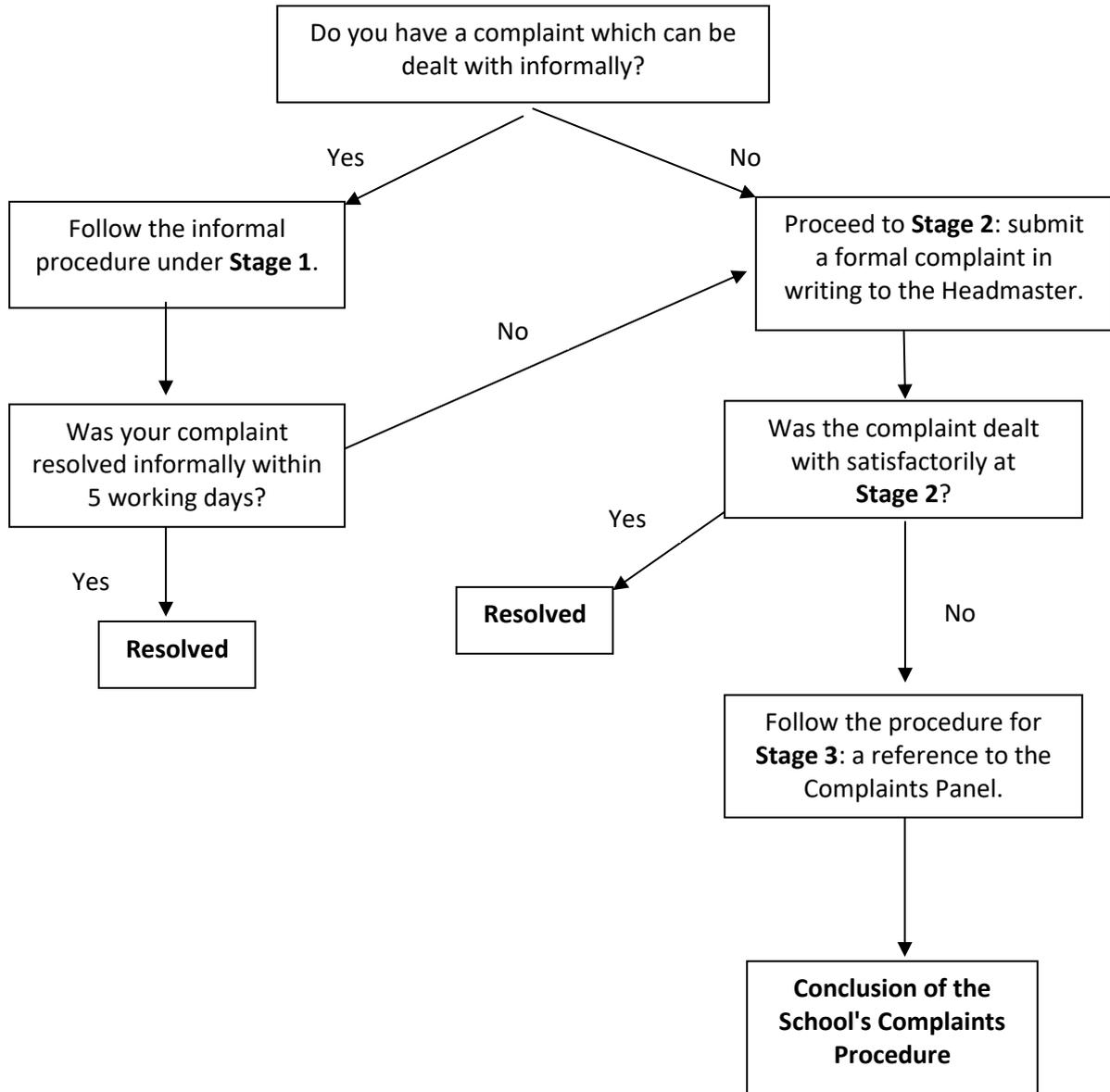
The School will keep a written record of all complaints they receive and their outcome and shall provide such information to ISI/Ofsted, on request. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

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



Action Points

Action

Stage 1 log to be set up and kept by Headmaster's PA

Stage 1 complaints procedure to be outlined to HoDS/HoY/HSM

All logs for all stages to be centrally stored in Headmaster's Office

By

Headmaster/
Headmaster's PA

Headmaster

Headmaster/
Headmaster's PA