

Complaints Procedure: The Whole School Policy including EYFS and Boarding

1. BACKGROUND

Hall Grove has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if a parent does have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school should be considered a complaint and within the scope of this Complaints Procedure. We have developed a three-stage process to ensure complaints are dealt with effectively and parents should follow the steps set out below.

For the purpose of this Procedure, a school working day is considered as a full school working day within term time and does not include days within the school holidays or over half terms. Resolving a complaint does not necessarily mean finding in favour of the complainant. Where this Policy refers to “a parent”, “parents” or “the parent”, it should be taken to include one or both parents as applicable in the particular case in question.

2. OUR APPROACH

2.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- a. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- b. If a parent has a concern or complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter’s Form Teacher or Head of Boarding. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parent’s satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Section Leader, Deputy Head, Head of Pastoral Care, Head of Boarding or the Headmaster.
- c. Complaints made directly to the Section Leader, Head of Pastoral Care, Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- d. The Form Teacher or Head of Boarding 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 seven school working days or in the event that the Form Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parent will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- e. Should the complaint be against the Headmaster, the same procedures apply.

2.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- a. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is about the Headmaster then it will be directed by the Deputy Headmaster to the Chair of the Complaints Panel appointed by the School from time to time.
- b. The Headmaster will arrange to meet the parent, within ten school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- c. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- d. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- e. 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 the parent will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. This will happen within 7 school working days of the meeting with the parent.
- f. If the parent is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

2.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- a. If the parent wishes to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should make a request in writing to the Headmaster for the matter to be referred to a Complaints Panel, such request to be made within 7 school working days of the date of the Headmaster's letter confirming the outcome of Stage 2.
- b. The Headmaster, on behalf of the Complaints Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and refer it to the Chair of the Complaints Panel with a request that a hearing be scheduled. The referral should be made within seven school working days of receiving the parent's request for a Panel hearing.
- c. The Chair of the Panel will respond on behalf of the panel and schedule a hearing as soon as is practically possible or at most within 15 school working days of the matter being referred to them. The Panel shall make reasonable efforts to ensure the hearing is scheduled so as to enable the parent to attend the hearing and to provide reasonable notice of the hearing. In the event that, having made such reasonable efforts, one or both parents elects not to attend the scheduled hearing, the Panel remains obliged to proceed to hold the hearing and to consider the complaint in any event.
- d. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School and not a member of staff at the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Headmaster in his absolute discretion, whatever the nature of the complaint.
- e. The Panel hearing will be a full hearing of the merits of the complaint and the Panel may conduct the hearing as it sees fit. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or of any relevant matter be supplied not later than seven school working days in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three school working days prior to the hearing.
- f. The parent has the right to attend the hearing. The parent may, if they wish, be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- g. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. The decision will then be confirmed in writing within seven school working days of the Panel hearing.

- h. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and will confirm the timescale for its further investigations and for when its decision will be given. Wherever possible this will be within fourteen school working days of the hearing. If there is likely to be a delay in concluding its investigations, the parent will be kept updated as to the reasons and when it is anticipated the decision will be published.
 - i. After due consideration of all the facts they in their absolute discretion consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises and sent in writing to the parent, the Headmaster/Proprietor and, where relevant, the person about whom a complaint has been lodged.
 - j. The decision of the Panel is final and there is no further appeal.
- 2.4 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills 2008 Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 2.5 A record of complaints which are considered under Stages 2 and 3 of this Complaints Procedure is kept for at least three years and is available to Ofsted and ISI on request. It details whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether it is to be upheld. It also identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision and action taken by the School as a result of those complaints, whether or not they are upheld.
- 2.6 Parents of children in the EYFS can make a complaint to ISI should they feel the school are not fulfilling the EYFS requirements. The EYFS timescale for notifying complainants of the outcome of an investigation is 28 days. Contact details for ISI are as follows:
- Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100.
- Ofsted : <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints-schools>
- 2.7 In the academic year 2018/19 there were no complaints registered against the School under the formal Complaints Procedure.

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