

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

Northwood College has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy and its associated procedure.

Aim: The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible.

Policy Status: This policy has been approved by the Governing body of Northwood College. It provides guidelines for the handling of concerns and complaints. The complaints procedure associated with this policy may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain elements of the procedure can only be carried out during term time.

Guidance for parents: The overarching principle is that if a parent has a concern or complaint, they should inform us about it **as soon as possible**. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking to the appropriate member of staff. If you are dissatisfied with the response you have received you can write to the Head of Department, Head of Year, or Deputy Head of the Junior School as necessary who will conduct an investigation and you will receive a written response. If the complaint is still unresolved you should write to the Deputy Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School. If your complaint remains unresolved you should then write to the Head Mistress.

Please raise the concern initially as follows:

A concern about the safety of your child should be notified immediately to the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the Child Protection Officer or Designated Senior Person (See Child Safeguarding Policy).

Education issues - if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or Special Educational Needs, please speak or write to the Teacher, Head of Department or Head of Year, or Deputy Head of the Junior School as appropriate.

Pastoral care - for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the relevant Form Tutor, Head of Year or Deputy Head of the Junior School.

Disciplinary matters – a problem over disciplinary action taken or sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it and, if not resolved, with the Head of Department, Head of Year or Deputy Head of the Junior School.

Financial matters – a query relating to fees or extras should be raised with the Bursar.

Acknowledgement: We will acknowledge any notification of a written complaint within 5 working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, but, at the very least, oral feedback will be given.

Complaints still unresolved after consultation with the Head Mistress can be referred, in writing, to the Chairman of the Board of Governors who will instruct a Complaints Panel to investigate the complaint.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 — Informal Resolution

- 1) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 2) If parents or guardians have a complaint they should normally contact the pupil's Class Teacher or Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' or guardians' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher or Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult the Head of Department, Head of Year, or Deputy Head of the Junior School.
- 3) Complaints made directly to a senior member of staff will usually be referred to the relevant teacher or tutor, unless the person who has received the complaint deems it appropriate for him or her to deal with the matter personally.
- 4) Whichever member of staff receives and deals with the complaint, they 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 28 school working days or in the event that the Teacher, Form Tutor or the senior member of staff fails to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 — Formal Resolution

- 1) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents or guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Head Mistress. They will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 2) In most cases, the Head Mistress will speak, or write, to the parents or guardians concerned, normally within 5 school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If it is not possible to reach a resolution, usually because the complaint need further investigation, the Head Mistress will write to the parents to explain who will be conducting the investigation and provide an indication of the time frame in which this will happen.

- 3) It may be necessary for the Head Mistress to elect a senior member of staff (usually one of the Senior School Deputy Heads or Head of the Junior School) to carry out further investigations and to provide her with a written report of their investigation.
- 4) The person conducting the investigation will make written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 5) Once the Head Mistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, she will make a decision and parents or guardians will be informed of this decision in writing, together with the reasons for it.
- 6) If parents or guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 — Panel Hearing

- 1) The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel will be independent of the management and running of the school and the other two will be selected from the Board of Governors. Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the Chairman of the Board of Governors, who will also nominate a Chairman of the Panel. The Clerk to Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint in writing within 10 school working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 school working days of the Clerk to Governor's written acknowledgement.
- 2) 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 will be supplied to all parties not later than 5 school working days prior to the hearing. Similarly, where the parents or guardians wish the Panel to consider any further written material, then this should be supplied within the same time period.
- 3) The parents or guardians may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The parents or guardians must inform the Bursar, at least 3 school working days in advance, if they intend to be accompanied, by whom and in what role.
- 4) If the parents or guardians are to be accompanied, then any staff member involved may also be accompanied by a relative, teacher or friend.
- 5) If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' or guardians' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

- 6) After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it will complete within 30 school working days of the Hearing.
- 7) The Panel can:
 - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - Recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- 8) The Panel will write to the parents or guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the Head Mistress, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person concerning whom the complaint had been made.
- 9) Recommendations, if any, will be discussed with the Head Mistress and the Chair of Governors.
- 10) A written record will be held in the Complaints Register Database by the Head Mistress. All written records, statements and correspondence will be held confidentially by the Head Mistress.

Parents and guardians 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 the Secretary of State; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Early Years Provision (EYFS)

In the Early Years Provision in the Junior School, the record of complaint is kept for at least three years. If parents are dissatisfied with the response of the school they can make a complaint to either Ofsted or ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) if they so wish.