

THORPE HALL

SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (including for the Early Years Foundation Stage)

The school has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The following procedures are in place to deal with complaints.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents may make a request for the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

This complaints procedure may be invoked by a parent or legal guardian of a child currently registered at the school. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a “school day” is defined as a weekday during term time when the School is open. The definition of “school day” excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School’s website. Any references to parent or parents below includes legal guardians.

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

Stage 1: Informal Procedure

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- In the first instance if parents/guardians have a complaint they should normally contact their child’s class or form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the class or form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult with a more senior member of staff – Head of Year or Deputy Head.
- The class or form teacher 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 14 school days, or in the event that the class or form teacher and parent/guardian fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this complaints procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the School upon request.

Stage 2: Formal Procedure

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent/guardian should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Your complaint will be acknowledged normally within 24 hours of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

- In most cases, the Headteacher will communicate with the parents concerned, normally within 5 school 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 Headteacher to carry out further investigations. The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings, phone calls and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision. Please note that as some staff are not available throughout the holiday period, the complaint may take longer to resolve at this time. The aim would always be to resolve within 20 school days.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they can request that the complaint (as written above) be referred to a Panel Hearing – that being Stage 3 of this Procedure. This referral should be made in writing within 5 school days of the last communication the parent has received from the school.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition, both of which may need additional time.
- If parents wish to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to The Chair of Governors, Thorpe Hall School, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3RD. The Chair of Governors has been appointed by the Board of Governors for the formal management of Stage 3 Complaints, and to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint normally within 24 hours.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. 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, and, involvement with the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 school 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 3 school days prior to the hearing
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, but may be permitted in certain circumstances. Parents should make a request in writing to the Chair of Governors if they wish to be accompanied by a legal representation a minimum 5 school days before the panel hearing date
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations and relevant timescales. The Panel will write to the complainants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 school days. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainants, the Headteacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of those findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

Record Keeping

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except to the extent as required by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) 2014, that is where the Secretary of State or a body conduction and inspection under 109 of the 2008 Act requires access to them.

The School has a written procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents, and keeps a written record of any complaints, and their outcome. Additionally, the School will investigate written complaints relating to its fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. The record of complaints is available to Ofsted upon request. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years (a period determined by the 6-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances).

Parents should contact Ofsted if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

A record of all complaints, including EYFS, is kept to permit independent scrutiny by ISI or Ofsted of the school's handling of complaints. A summary of formal complaints received by the school can be found in Appendix 2 of this document.

A record is also kept of the outcome of complaints and of the recommendations and actions arising from a panel hearing. In addition, the school must provide ISI and Ofsted, on request with a written record of all complaints made and the action taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents may make a separate complaint to the authorities that regulate us – those authorities are: Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House

9-12 Long Lane

London

EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100

OFSTED ask that complaints are registered through the contact form on their website which is: <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Or email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Persistent correspondence – Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Governors.

Reviewed:	October 2022
Approved:	October 2022
Next Review:	October 2023

Appendix 1 – Summary of timeframe for dealing with complaints

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. 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 the timeframes outlined below.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

Stage 1	14 school days – if not resolved will proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2 – Acknowledgment	Normally within 24 hours during term-time & as soon as is practicable during school closure periods.
Stage 2 – Discussion with parents & course of action explained	Normally within 20 school days. If not resolved will proceed to Stage 3
Stage 3 – Acknowledgment	Acknowledged by the Chair of Governors normally within 24 hours
Stage 3 – Panel Hearing	Chair to convene panel for the hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 school days of acknowledgement
Stage 3 – Panel Decision	The Panel will write to the complainants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 school days

Formal Complaints Log

Academic Year	Number of Complaints
2015/2016	4
2016/2017	0
2017/18	0
2018/19	1
2019/20	3
2020/21	1