

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

POLICY STATEMENT

Hampshire Collegiate School recognises that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school.

At HCS we aim to:

- Take all concerns and complaints seriously.
- Make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of partnership.
- Resolve all complaints within 28 working days of the complaint being received.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document.
- Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken.
- Ensure that no-one, including pupils, are penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved. (*Note: This information is provided to Ofsted at their request*)
- Review regularly at senior leadership level the written record of complaints and their outcomes
- Keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

A record of formal complaints and their outcomes is kept by the Principal and is reviewed regularly by the Chairman of the LGB.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2009-2010) was **0**. In 2010-11 there were **2** complaints

Parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI (or, regarding boarding welfare or EYFS, to OFSTED) if they so wish. Relevant contact details are set out below.

ISI: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
Phone: 020 7600 0100 or e-mail via the ISI website: www.isi.net

OFSTED: Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA
Phone: 0300 123 4666 or e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

This policy is applicable to all pupils in our school including our boarders and those in our EYFS setting. It is available to staff, pupils, parents and the parents of prospective pupils on the school's website and paper copies are available on request from the school office.

PROCEDURES

Informal Resolution

At HCS we recognise that, almost invariably, the sooner concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found. In the first instance, you are encouraged to raise your concern or complaint with any member of staff. This would normally be your child's Form Teacher or Tutor, Head of Year or Head of Department.

That person will try to identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred. They make a written record of your concern or complaint, the date on which it was received, and they try to resolve the matter themselves or refer you to the appropriate person.

If the matter cannot be resolved within 6 working days, or in the event that you are not satisfied, you may make a formal complaint to the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School would normally refer you to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

There are three stages to the formal complaints procedure at HCS.

Stage 1: A complaint is dealt with by the Head of School (at this stage the complaint form should be used (Appendix 1))

Stage 2: A complaint is dealt with by the Principal.

Stage 3: A complaint is dealt with by the Local Governing Body Complaints Panel

The decision of the LGB Complaints Panel is final.

STAGE 1: COMPLAINT IS DEALT WITH BY THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Formal complaints should be in writing and sent to the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School. If you have difficulty in putting your complaint in writing, you are asked to make an appointment with the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School who will help you do so.

The Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School decides the best person to deal with the complaint, so you are asked to indicate if there is someone with whom you might have difficulty discussing the complaint. The member of staff chosen to deal with the complaint will not necessarily be a senior member of staff.

In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will normally be overseen by the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School.

If an investigation is needed, the investigating member of staff will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or against whom the complaint has been made, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of any interviews.
- Present relevant information and recommendation for resolution to the Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School

The Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School will make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received, the date on which the matter was dealt with and the outcome of the procedure. You will receive a copy of this written record within 3 days following this process.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this stage, if you feel that your complaint is sufficiently serious, or if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, you may take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

STAGE 2: COMPLAINT IS DEALT WITH BY THE PRINCIPAL

If you wish to take your complaint to this stage you should put your complaint in writing to the Principal. Again, if you have difficulty in doing that, you are asked to seek assistance from the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School.

The Principal may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Principal also decides whether it would be helpful to meet with you to discuss your complaint.

The decision in respect of the resolution of your complaint will normally be made within 6 working days of the Principal receiving the complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this stage or if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled by the Principal you may take your complaint to the third stage of this procedure.

STAGE 3: COMPLAINT IS DEALT WITH BY THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY [LGB] COMPLAINTS PANEL

The third stage of the formal complaints procedure is the LGB's Complaints Panel.

If you wish to take your complaint to this stage you are required to put your complaint in writing to the Chair of the LGB or to the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School marked for the Chair. It is important that you set the matter out in sufficient detail.

On receiving a written complaint, a hearing by an the LGB Complaints Panel will be arranged within 10 working days. You may attend the hearing in person and may be accompanied if you so wish; in which case you are required to notify the clerk of the name and occupation of such a person.

The composition of the LGB Complaints Panel

The LGB Complaints Panel would normally consist of no less than three people (all of whom are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint), at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school, and the panel choose their own Chair.

The LGB Complaints Panel hearing is as independent and impartial as possible and no member of the LGB sits on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the composition of the panel, LGB members try to ensure that there is a cross-section of the members, taking into account the issues of race, gender, religious affiliation and other equality issues. Care is taken not to involve the whole LGB as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The process of the LGB Complaints Panel Hearing

A clerk is appointed by the school to be the contact point for the complainant and the LGB members of the Complaints Panel.

The appointed clerk's responsibility is to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient or acceptable to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- invite both the complainant and the Principal to put their position in writing for the panel to consider.
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing.
- record the proceedings.
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Chair of the LGB Complaints Panel's responsibility is to ensure:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption.
- written material is seen by all parties.
- key findings of fact are made and each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- the hearing is conducted in as an informal manner as possible with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently.
- the findings and recommendations are communicated appropriately to those involved (see below)

The hearing is held in private and, acknowledging that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting, the proceedings are made as welcoming as possible. Care is taken to ensure the setting is not adversarial and is as informal as possible. Extra care in this respect is taken where the complainant is a child.

The role of the LGB Complaints Panel Hearing

The aim of the hearing is always to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. Therefore, it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

Communication of the LGB Complaints Panel Findings

After due consideration the panel will decide to do one or more of the following:

- 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.

The Chair of the panel ensures that the LGB, the Principal, the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, are notified in writing of the panel's findings and recommendations within 3 working days of the hearing taking place.

A copy of the panel's findings are also made available for inspection by the UCST Board.

The decision of the LGB Complaints Panel is final.

Review Date: October 2012

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name	
Your relationship to the student	
Address	
Postcode	
Day time telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of your complaint below	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	YES / NO
If so, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:

For Official use only			
Date acknowledgement sent		Complaint resolved at which stage	
Acknowledgement sent by		Complaint recorded in school records	
Complaint referred to			
Complaint referred on (date)			