



33a - PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

(Including number of complaints in previous year)

This policy applies to all sections of the School, including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Introduction and Aims

Duke of Kent School highly values its partnership with parents and seeks to resolve any concerns or complaints, responding quickly, thoroughly and effectively when such concerns or complaints are raised.

A complaint is defined as any matter about which a parent of a pupil (or anyone with parental responsibilities for a pupil) is unhappy and seeks action by the School.

Even in the happiest and best run school communities, complaints are likely to be raised from time to time. It is the intention of this document, which is available to parents and prospective parents on the School's website and in hard copy on request, to set out the most appropriate ways in which such complaints can be addressed.

Duke of Kent School aims to respond to parents' concerns and complaints, and to improve the School's practice in the light of constructive criticism. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School, can be dealt with under the scope of this procedure which is only available to parents of pupils, meaning current registered pupils. This procedure will only apply to past pupils if the initial complaint was raised and acknowledged by the School in writing when the pupil was still registered as a current pupil.

See the Behaviour Policy for information on complaints related to exclusions.

Stage I – Informal Resolution

It is generally in the interest of all concerned that complaints be resolved in as efficient and amicable a way as possible and this can usually be done in an informal fashion.

Where parents have a complaint, verbal or email contact in the first place is with Form Tutors, who will acknowledge receipt within two working days. This can often lead to the matter being rapidly resolved.

Early attention to concerns can prevent situations from escalating and parents are asked to raise concerns and complaints with Form Tutors without delay. Where appropriate the Form Tutor will arrange a meeting to discuss the parent's concern rather than exploring sensitive or complex matters by email.

The Senior Leadership Team at Duke of Kent School can be contacted via the Office by any parent who wishes to arrange an appointment to discuss a concern or complaint.

Where such complaints are addressed by parents to a Head of Section (Head of Senior School or Head of Pre-Prep and Prep) or to the Head or Deputy Head, Form Tutors will in any case be involved.

A written record should be kept by form staff of any such complaint and passed to the Head of Section, even where a complaint is rapidly and completely resolved.

The School aims to deal with complaints promptly and sets five working days as the target timescale within which Stage 1 complaints should be satisfactorily resolved.

Although the School is not required to keep a record of informal complaints, we do so in order to ensure that any patterns may be identified.

Where complaints are not successfully resolved in this way, a more formal procedure is also available and at this juncture, all complaints are deemed to be formal complaints and will follow the procedure published on the School website.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

Parents should now be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Head (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Head). She will seek to respond to such complaints within three working days of receipt or, in exceptional cases of absence on her part, refer the matter to the Deputy Head who will respond to such complaints within three working days of receipt and this reply will acknowledge receipt and summarise what the School believes to be the nature of the complaint(s).

The Head will carry out appropriate investigations and keep a written record of all meetings and interviews pertaining to the complaint. The Head will then produce a decision in writing within ten working days. Copies of the written record and the proposed resolution to the complaint will be made available to the complainant.

Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

If parents remain dissatisfied, they should respond within 10 working days and then proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. In the absence of any communication within these timescales, the School will deem the complaint resolved.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

Parents will be referred to submit their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors who has authority to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Chair will acknowledge written complaints within three working days of receipt.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel, which will comprise three individuals who were not involved in any aspect of the complaint. Two members of the Panel will be current Governors and one member will be independent of the management and running of the School and who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinizing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments.

Where a hearing is called, all relevant documentation should be sent to members of the panel within five working days of the hearing and the hearing itself will take place within fifteen working days of the complaint being acknowledged by the Chair of Governors.

Parents may be accompanied to a hearing by one other person, perhaps a relative or friend. Legal representation at a hearing is not considered to be appropriate.

The Panel will carry out any further investigation which is deemed appropriate and will then reach a decision and inform parents in writing as soon as practicable thereafter and within five working days of the Panel Hearing, other than in exceptional circumstances. Findings and recommendations of the Panel will be circulated to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about. They will also be available

for inspection on the School premises by the Governors and the Head. The Panel Hearing and recommendations are the final part of the School's complaints procedures although that does not preclude Parents referring the matter to external regulatory bodies.

Records of Complaints

A written record of all complaints, whether or not they go beyond Stage 1, will be maintained and whether they are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel Hearing. This record will also include the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld and parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints about the fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements

Additional requirements apply to the School's EYFS arrangements, beyond those which apply to the main school. Written complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements at the School will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days and a record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. In addition, parents can contact Ofsted and ISI as below:

Ofsted – Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD - Tel: 0300 123 1231

ISI – Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA – Tel: 0207 600 0100

Where timescales are given in working days, this is defined as Monday – Friday during term time. Complaints received during holiday periods will be dealt with as soon as practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances, the complainant will be notified of an extension to the timescales and the reason why an extension is necessary when the complaint is acknowledged.

In the 2020/21 academic year, the School received no formal complaints which progressed to a Panel Hearing.

Person responsible for this policy: The Head

Reviewed: September 2021

Next review: September 2022