



GUILDFORD HIGH SCHOOL

4-13 COMPLAINTS

POLICY

Guildford High School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. Nevertheless, if parents have concerns or complaints about their child's education or welfare at Guildford High School, they can expect these to be taken seriously and resolved through informal dialogue with the relevant member(s) of staff. All members of staff are encouraged to deal with parental concerns and complaints, which lie within their area of responsibility but complaints incapable of resolution at a particular level are referred to the appropriate senior person, including the Headmistress, with parents kept informed of the action being taken.

Where parents consider that their complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily, or where they consider a matter particularly serious from the outset, they may make a formal complaint (Stage 2), usually in writing, and in accordance with the following procedures. However, all complaints may be made and considered initially on an *informal* basis (Stage 1).

A record of all formal complaints, action taken, and resolution are recorded in writing and held for at least three years in a complaints file which is kept by the Headmistress and the Local Governing Body. The written record of complaints and their outcomes is reviewed regularly by the Headmistress to determine whether review or change in practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified, and appropriate interventions made.

Parents may also make a complaint directly to:

The Independent Schools Inspectorate
1st Floor CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Tel: 020 776 8649
Email: info@isi.net

and/or (for complaints concerning the EYFS setting)

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M21 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where required by law and where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

For the purposes of this policy, Guildford High School defines parents as ‘parents of current pupils’ or ‘those with parental responsibility for current pupils’. The policy does not extend to parents of prospective pupils. It does apply to parents of Old Girls if the complaint was initially raised when their daughter was still a pupil at Guildford High School. The complaints procedure does not cover exclusions or expulsions as complaints about these are dealt with under Exclusion, Removal and Review Policy as a separate procedure.

There is a separate policy and set of procedures for Pupil Concerns and Complaints.

This policy applies to all sections of the school, including the EYFS setting. Guildford High School seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

This document is available to all interested parties, including parents and parents of prospective pupils, on the school’s website and on request in hard copy from Junior and Senior Reception, in accordance with the school’s Provision of Information Policy.

This document is reviewed annually by the Local Governing Body or as events or legislation change requires. The next scheduled date for review is November 2020. Guildford High School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school’s Equal Opportunity Policy document.

HOW GUILDFORD HIGH SCHOOL DEFINES A COMPLAINT

The School defines a complaint as any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. It may be a dissatisfaction about action taken by the school or about lack of action. A complaint may be made formally or informally. A complaint may be made in a number of ways – in writing or verbally.

A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example, done something wrong, failed to do something it should have done, acted unfairly or impolitely, or if the parent is unhappy about any matter and seeks action from the school.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department in the school or about an individual member of staff, and about any aspect of school life.

HOW WE RECORD A COMPLAINT

A written record will be kept of complaints, whether they are resolved informally (Stage 1), following a formal procedure (Stage 2) or progress to a panel hearing (Stage 3), and of action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, whether or not they were upheld.

Ofsted and ISI will be provided, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

The school's record of formal complaints contains the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome (and whether complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing)
- Location of file holding detailed evidence (where appropriate)

PROCEDURES FOR THE RESOLUTION OF A COMPLAINT

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION (INFORMAL COMPLAINT)

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally, but should this not be the case (usually within ten working days), then parents can proceed with their complaint to Stage 2 of this procedure, at which point it becomes a formal complaint, unless their complaint was raised as a formal complaint in this first instance. Informal complaints are generally resolved by a head of department, a head of year or a deputy head, by phone, email or in a face-to-face meeting. This would be the case if they formally invoke the complaints procedure, present their complaint in a formal letter, seek a meeting with the Headmistress or make it clear that they are making a formal complaint in the first instance.

Writing to the Headmistress in the first instance does not automatically make a complaint formal although formal complaints should normally be addressed to her in writing.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION (FORMAL COMPLAINT)

- If an informal (stage 1) complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis and parents wish to escalate to a formal (stage 2) complaint, parents must usually set their full complaint in writing to the headmistress.
- A complaint may immediately be considered a formal complaint if the parents seek a formal meeting with the head, or raise issues through a formal letter, which may require a written response from the school.
- If a concern about a minor matter is repeated and the parent is clearly not satisfied with the school's original response, it is regarded as a formal complaint.
- The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmistress or a senior member of staff not so far involved in the complaint, will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter and, if possible, reach a resolution. During the school holidays, the Headmistress may agree to speak to the parent once the following term has started.
- In accordance with EYFS legislation, the school will resolve any formal complaints regarding pupils in our EYFS setting within 28 calendar days of having received the complaint and will inform the complainants of the outcome.
- It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmistress 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 Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

- If parents seek to invoke stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, or because of dissatisfaction with the response made to a formal complaint), they will be referred to the Chair of the Local Governing Body who will call a hearing of the complaints panel.
- 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 the Guildford High School or United Learning. It is likely that one of the members of the panel would be a member of the Local Governing Body. The independent member must not be connected with the School or United Learning. DfE guidance is that a person who has held a position of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. All the panel members shall be appointed by United Learning or its representatives. The Chair of the Local Governing Body will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days. In school holidays it may not always be possible to convene a hearing within 15 working days.
- If the panel thinks it necessary, it may require 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 three working 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, and the proceedings will not be tape-recorded without the consent of both the chair of the complaints panel and the parents, and any tape-recording will be used only to assist the panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons, and will belong to the School.
- Where a parent has indicated a wish to continue to stage three, the panel hearing should take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. The panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parent may decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the 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, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the Hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be provided to the parents, the Headmistress, the Local Governing Body and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- A copy of any findings is made available for inspection at the school by the UCST Board and Headmistress.

Between September 2018 and September 2019, the number of complaints made under the formal complaints procedure is: 1

Date of next review: November 2020

Reviewed by: Deputy Head (Academic)