

## **33a: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Reviewed by GT: December 2021

Review: December 2022/

### **Introduction**

Arnold House School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The ethos of the School is to welcome parents and carers and to address any concerns without delay. However, if parents of current pupils do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. The procedure does not apply to past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. Any safeguarding concerns are always referred to the appropriate authority as per the School's safeguarding policy and procedures.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's Key Person if their son is in the Early Years; their son's Form Teacher (Years 1 to 4) or Form Tutor (Years 5 to 8). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the Key Person/Form Teacher/Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, they will consult with the appropriate Head of Year, or member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Complaints can be made directly to any member of staff, i.e. a non-Form Teacher/Form Tutor, or subject specialist. The member of staff will consult with the appropriate Key Person/Form Teacher/Form Tutor, Head of Year, or member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- The relevant member of staff will make a written record of the parents' complaint and the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 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.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet/speak to the parents concerned, within ten working 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations. If this is the case, the investigation will be concluded in no more than a further ten working days.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should 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), they will be referred to a Convenor, appointed by the Governors to call hearings 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 School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Convenor, who will then, on behalf of the Panel, acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within fifteen working 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 five 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.
- 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 make findings, reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five 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 made available in writing for inspection on the school premises by the Headmaster, and Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.

### **Record Keeping**

A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made under Stage 2 or Stage 3 of this Procedure, including details of:

- (i) Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- (ii) Action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

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.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **A complaint**

Complaints are defined in the ISI regulations thus: ‘Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is now a complaint, and in the scope of the procedure.’

The School keeps a record of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure each year in order to comply with the regulatory requirements as set out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Exclusions are not covered by the Complaints Procedure; for our policy on Exclusions, please see Policy 9a: Behaviour.

### **Working day**

‘Working day’ is defined as a week day (Monday to Friday) during the School’s term time, as published in the termly calendar.

## **Complaints in the Last Academic Year**

There were no complaints under Stage 2 of this Procedure in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Giles Tollit, December 2021