



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS

**This policy and the procedures within it also
apply to the EYFS**

Updated	Review Date	Version
July 2023	September 2023	2023.02

Signed: Mr John Clarke (Chair of the Board)

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant School policies, including the Examinations Policy.

Introduction

Abercorn School (referred to as 'the School' and 'we' in this policy) is committed to the highest standards of teaching and pastoral care. We endeavour to make all forms of communication as accessible as possible to the school community, including a complaints policy and procedure in the event of dissatisfaction.

Abercorn School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint it will be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure.

Information is currently disseminated to parents and guardians in various ways including via the Abercorn welcome website, email, Social Media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, newsletters and the School website. The welcome website highlights many opportunities for personal consultation and discussion as the School believes it is crucial to develop excellent channels of communication.

This policy is made available to parents and guardians of currently registered pupils, issued when a child joins the school, and is available on the school website. A hard copy can also be requested via the school office.

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

1. To consider the wellbeing of the children at all times within this process;
2. To manage all parental communication professionally, fairly and courteously; and
3. To resolve all queries and complaints as swiftly and satisfactorily as possible.

This Policy and Procedure, referred to subsequently in this document as "the policy," applies to current parents or legal guardians. Separate policies apply if a pupil has been excluded, asked to leave or suspended. These are the Exclusion Policy and the Sanctions and Behaviour Policy.

This policy outlines a three stage procedure:

Stage 1: An informal raising of a concern, notified orally or in writing to a member of staff

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing to the Head

Stage 3: A referral to the Complaints Review Panel

Timescales

The School aims to resolve any complaint in a timely manner. We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction.

This policy distinguishes between a concern or difficulty that can be resolved informally and a formal complaint that will require investigation. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday during term time, when School is open with children on site, excluding bank holidays. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. Normally, if a complaint is made on the last day of a school term, the first working day would be the first day of the next school term. When

we refer to 'The Head' and 'Chair of the Board', we acknowledge that, in some circumstances, these roles may be delegated appropriately.

EYFS Timescales

Please note that additional requirements apply for EYFS settings. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the parent/guardian notified of the outcome of the investigation within twenty-eight working days. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI, on request.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

Most complaints can be dealt with informally and the opportunity will be given for discussion to resolve the matter in an unconstrained manner. All Staff, including the Head, will make themselves available to parents/guardians who have raised a complaint.

The Form Teacher should be the first point of contact as the chief pastoral carer for your child, unless it is inappropriate to do so. For example, it may be appropriate to contact a specialist subject teacher instead. If the Form or subject teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Head, as appropriate, in the process of seeking resolution. Informal complaints made directly to the Head or Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form/subject teacher unless the Head or Deputy Head deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. If, however, the complaint is against the Head and the parents feel unable to discuss it informally with the Head, the parent/guardian should raise it directly with the Bursar, who will act as Clerk to the Board and pass the matter to the Board.

The School will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt.

We will make every effort to resolve a complaint at the informal stage within 15 working days of receipt. Should a complaint not be resolved informally, then the parents or guardians may proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the parents/guardians are not satisfied with the informal resolution, they should raise it as a formal complaint with details of the complaint to be made in writing, to the Head, using the School's Formal Complaint Form within five working days of the decision being made at the end of Stage 1.

The parent should obtain a Formal Complaints Form from the School Office, or use the form in Appendix B of this policy. Any formal complaint brought to the attention of a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be passed to the attention of the Head. Your formal complaint will be acknowledged by writing within two working days, during term time, along with the likely timescale for a response or resolution. It may be necessary for the matter to be investigated.

All formal complaints are directed to the Head, who will endeavour to follow up the points raised, if appropriate, with the members of Staff concerned and respond to the parents/guardians, either in person, in writing or by phone within fifteen working days from the receipt of the complaint, during term time. It may be necessary to ask the parents to attend a meeting with the Head to discuss the complaint further. Please note that any complaint received within fifteen working days of the end of term or half term may take longer to resolve owing to the limited availability of personnel during school holidays.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should contact the Bursar, who will pass the

matter on to the Board. The Chair of the Board 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/guardians to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practical, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents/guardians will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for their decision.

Stage 3 – Complaints Review Panel

If the matter is not resolved at the end of Stage 2, and the parents/guardians wish the matter to proceed further, to Stage 3 of this Procedure, a Complaints Review Panel will be convened.

To request a hearing before the Complaints Review Panel, parents/guardians should write to the Bursar within five working days of the decision being made at the end of Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. The request will normally be considered only if the parents/guardians have completed the procedure at Stage 2. The Bursar will then pass the matter on to the Board.

Parents should ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and their full contact details accompany any letter to the Chair. Please also state the outcome that you desire alongside a list of documentation you believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to review. The Chair of the Board will acknowledge your request in writing within five working days.

The Chair of the Board will appoint the Complaints Review Panel as soon as reasonably practicable. The panel will usually comprise of two members of the Board, who have not been directly involved in previous consideration of the complaint, and a third party who is independent of the management and running of the School. The Panel will not usually sit during school holidays.

The Bursar will schedule a Panel hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint under Stage 3.

The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint that have not previously been raised as part of the complaints procedure. The parents/guardians who have lodged the complaint will be invited to attend and can be accompanied to a panel hearing, if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The parents will be required to notify the Bursar in advance of who will accompany them.

If the parents/guardians subsequently decide not to attend, the panel hearing will take place and the Panel will consider the complaint in their absence. The Panel will issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion, unless the parent/guardian later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.

If the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint, or any other related matter, be supplied in advance of the hearing. Furthermore, if there is any relevant documentation in the possession of the parent/guardian that the School has not seen or been made aware of and the parent/guardian considers it relevant to the Complaints Review Panel, they may supply this in advance of the hearing.

Copies of such documents shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days before the hearing. Any such further documents received within five working days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.

The Role of the Panel

The Panel establishes the facts surrounding the complaint that has been made and whether the School's complaints procedure has been followed. The Panel, following consideration of the matter, will determine whether to uphold the complaint, in whole or in part, or whether to

dismiss the complaint.

The Panel Hearing

The hearing must provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy or the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. If terminated, the original decision may stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with the way in which the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and any comments will be noted.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' or guardians' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

The Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 15 working days. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be provided to the parent/guardian and, where relevant, the person complained about, and made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Board and the Head.

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

Written records will be kept of all formal complaints and their outcomes when the complaint is submitted in writing or when a panel hearing has occurred. Any action taken by the School, regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld, will also be recorded. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will remain confidential and will be filed on the school premises for a period of seven years, except when the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them. Records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Complaints related to public Examinations

All requests for post-result services such as access to scripts, clerical re-checks, reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and appeals to the awarding bodies as well as internal complaints and appeals related to centre assessed marks will abide by the Examinations Policy, Section 9, 'Complaints and Appeals.'

APPENDIX A – CONTACTING OFSTED OR ISI

All schools are regulated by Ofsted, an independent organisation which reports directly to the Government. Independent Schools are also regulated and inspected by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.

Parents/guardians of pupils have the right to contact either body if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements

Parents can also contact the regulatory authority Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) regarding any complaint concerning Safeguarding. Details of how to contact Ofsted are given at the end of this procedure (Appendix A). Please note; Ofsted's expectation is that parents/guardians of pupils will usually follow the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. The Senior Designated Leads for Safeguarding, currently the Head or Deputy Head, will provide the name and contact details for the LADO with responsibility for Abercorn School, on request. Alternatively, these details may be found online at <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/lscb/information-professionals-and-volunteers/lado-managing-allegations#:~:text=Westminster%20%2D%20accesstochildrensservices%40westminster.gov,or%20tel%3A%20020%207641%204000>

Concerns can be reported to Ofsted by mail, phone, email, or online form:

Post: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Online: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

Parents/guardians may also contact ISI by mail, phone or email:

Post: ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Email: concerns@isi.net

APPENDIX B – FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM

Child's name and Form:	
What is the nature of the complaint? (please tick)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff conduct	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral care
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Timetabling
<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of premises	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra-curricular activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please give details)	
Please give details of the complaint:	
Date(s) of any incident(s)	Time(s)
If the complaint is about someone's behaviour, please give the names of any witnesses to the incident(s):	
Action taken by you:	
Name:	Position (parent or staff):
Signed:	Date:

APPENDIX C – FORMAL COMPLAINTS MADE WITHIN THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR

Number of formal stage 2 complaints in 2022/2023: 0

Number of formal stage 3 complaints in 2022/2023: 0