

## Complaints Procedure

### Statement [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(a)]

Pupils, carers and parents are encouraged, through this procedure and through the pastoral structures which allow parents and pupils throughout the School (including pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage) to make contact with well-placed staff, to make complaints easily and without anxiety and in the knowledge that complaints will be treated seriously, impartially and, except where disclosure is legally required, confidentially. This procedure is available to all parents via the School's website and in the joining information and handbooks provided for parents. Parents of prospective pupils registered for entry are provided with a copy. [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(b); Part 6, Paragraph 32(3)(f)]

### Informal resolution [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(d)]

- Resolution

Parents or carers should wherever possible seek an early and informal resolution of all complaints. The School will wish to take whatever measures are necessary to sort out any problems effectively before they turn a cause into a complaint; such measures will include some or all of the following: giving advice or reassurance; explaining the context to an incident or decision; gathering information from other staff or from pupils; finding information from other sources; referring the potential complaint to a senior colleague; reviewing or amending practice; giving feed-back to parents; apologising for mistakes or oversights.

- Making contact

A parent or carer with a potential complaint should normally first contact their child's Class or Form Teacher (Reception to Year 8) or Head of House (Years 9 – 13), although there may be occasions where the first contact may be with an alternative, normally more senior, teacher. Other staff (for example, a Subject Coordinator, Head of Department, Principal, Senior Deputy Heads, Assistant Head or Deputy Head) may need to be involved or consulted if this teacher cannot resolve the matter alone.

- Record-keeping

Class or Form Teachers and Heads of House keep a written record of complaints raised with them and the date on which they were received. In common with other correspondence from parents, details of complaints made in this way are kept on pupils' confidential files.

- Time-frame

In the event that a parent or carer (or a pupil using this procedure exceptionally) remains dissatisfied that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached through the School's response and within a reasonable time (normally ten School days), then the parent is entitled to proceed with a formal written complaint in accordance with the procedure below.

## **Formal Complaints [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(e)]**

The process below reflects the fact that Highgate is three schools in one. The School, or parents or carers, may consider it more appropriate to go direct to Stage 2 (e.g. for complaints of a particularly serious kind or for a complaint relating to the actions or conduct of a Principal) or directly from Stage 1 to Stage 3 depending on the circumstances of a particular complaint.

- Stage 1 - Formal Resolution by a Principal

If the complaint has not been resolved informally the parent or carer should put it in writing, stating that a complaint is being made, addressed either to the Senior Deputy Heads (Senior School), the Principal of the Junior School or the Principal of the Pre-Preparatory School (*a Principal*), who will decide after consideration the appropriate course of action to take (if one of these senior managers has been involved in the matter during the informal resolution stage, it may be appropriate for the complaint to proceed directly to Stage 2). At this point a formal complaint will be registered and acknowledged within five School days.. Where necessary, the Principal will meet with the parent or carer, normally within ten School days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter and if possible, to reach a resolution at this stage. Where a complaint is received during a School holiday, it will be deemed to have reached the School on the first full School day following its arrival. It may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Principal will keep written records of all complaints, and of meetings held in relation to them. Once the Principal is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a response to the parent's or carer's complaint will be made and the parent will be informed in writing<sup>j</sup>, within fifteen School days: the nature of the response will depend on the nature of the complaint but it will always give a judgement whether and to what extent, if at all, the complaint is justified, and reasons; the response may include actions which the School intends to take or a decision. A parent or carer who is not satisfied should proceed to the next stage.

- Stage 2 - Formal Resolution by the Head

If there has been a Stage 1 Resolution but it has not resolved the complaint satisfactorily (or, alternatively, where the complaint proceeds directly to Stage 2 as above) the parent should write to the Head within fifteen School days stating why resolution by the Head is requested and, wherever possible, the action which the parent or carer wishes the School to take to resolve the problem.

The procedure to be followed by the Head at Stage 2 will involve the same steps, timescale, record keeping and form of response as set out for resolution by a Principal in Stage 1. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Head may consider it more appropriate to deal with it jointly with a Governor.

A parent or carer who is not satisfied, after receiving the Head's decision, should proceed to Stage 3.

- Stage 3 – Independent Resolution [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(f), (g), (h), (i)]

If a parent feels that either Stage 1 or Stage 2, or where relevant both, have not resolved a complaint satisfactorily, the parent or carer should write within ten School days to The Secretary and Clerk to the Governing Body, Highgate School, North Road, London N6 4AY, who will acknowledge the letter of complaint within five School days. A Panel of three who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, consisting of two Governors and one person of standing who is independent of the management and running of the School, will be convened to hear the complaint,

normally within twenty School days. The Secretary and Clerk to the Governing Body, unless he is the object of the complaint, will be present to act as clerk to the Panel. Members of the Panel will have access to all relevant documentation and will be able to ask the School and the parent or carer for any other relevant information or documentation. It is intended that the process should not be legalistic. Parents may be accompanied at this meeting by their daughter or son and by one other person (e.g. relative, friend or a relevant specialist). If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's or carer's concern without further investigation. Where further investigation is needed, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will give written findings in response to the complaint (normally within fifteen School days): the findings will depend on the nature of the complaint but the Panel will always give a judgement whether and to what extent, if at all, the complaint is justified, and the Panel's reasons; the findings may include recommendations or actions which the Panel requires the School to take. The findings of the panel will be final. A copy of the findings will be (a) provided to the parent or carer and, where relevant, any person who is the object of the complaint, by electronic mail or by post, at the discretion of the Panel and (b) available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head.

### **Records of Complaints and Confidentiality [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(j), (k)]**

Written records of formal complaints are kept (regardless of whether they are upheld) in line with the School's Retention Schedule. These records indicate whether the complaints are resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3 and the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests due access to them.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (EYFS Requirement 3.74; 3.75)**

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Parents of pupils in the EYFS may also contact Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) or ISI (the Independent Schools' Inspectorate) to make a complaint should they wish.

*Ofsted may be contacted by writing or e-mailing or ringing:*

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
08456 014772 (8am to 6pm, Monday – Friday)

*Independent Schools Inspectorate may be contacted by writing or emailing or ringing:*

CAP House  
9 - 12 Long Lane

London  
EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100  
Fax 020 7776 8849

### **Other relevant policies**

For complaints relating to admissions, a separate appeals procedure exists which is outlined in the School Admissions Policy.

### **Number of formal complaints [ISSRs 2014 Part 6, Paragraph 32(3)(f)]**

The number of complaints first registered under the formal procedure was:

2021-2022: Pre-Prep: 0                      Junior School: 0                      Senior School: 1

### **Appendix 1: Summary of time scales for a complaint [ISSRs 2014 Part 7, Paragraph 33(c)]**

	Initial meeting (from receipt of complaint)	Response (from date of meeting)
Informal	Normally within 10 School days	
Stage 1	Normally within 10 School days	Normally within 15 School days
Stage 2	Normally within 10 School days	Normally within 15 School days
Stage 3	Normally within 20 School days	Normally within 15 School days

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<sup>i</sup> The Principal may invite the parent or carer to a meeting in which s/he will set out his or her response which s/he will subsequently confirm in writing to the parent or carer within five school days.