

HUNTER HALL SCHOOL
COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS PROCEDURE



Prepared and revised	April 2010	AT
Approved	July 2010	FAW
Reviewed	June 2013	FAW
Reviewed and amended	October 2014	DV
Amended	June 2016	DV
Approved	June 2016	CY
Reviewed and amended	September 2017	DV
Approved	September 2017	PK (Chair of Governors)
Reviewed	June 2019	DV
Approved	June 2019	NH (Vice Chair/acting chair of governors)
Reviewed	October 2021	DV
Approved	October 2021	NH (Chair of Governors)

Reviewed and amended	February 2022	DV
----------------------	---------------	----

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS PROCEDURE

This policy is written with regard to regulatory requirements from ISI 'Manner in which complaints are to be handled'

A distinction should be drawn between, on the one hand, an expression of concern/informal complaint and, on the other, a formal complaint.

Of the very few complaints the school is asked to address in the course of a year, virtually all are resolved at an informal level. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy, action should be sort – we pride ourselves on working in partnership with parents.

Parents should seek to resolve matters at an informal level in the first instance - this is usually best done by discussion and agreement whether that be by email or face to face.

There are 3 stages to our complaints procedures at HH :

1. Expressions of Concern or Informal Complaints

If a parent has a concern about some aspect of their child's life at school, they should, in the first instance, contact the teacher (or, if the matter is a particularly sensitive one, the Deputy Head or EYFS Foundation Stage Manager), who will try to assist, or will refer the matter to another member of staff, as necessary.

If the concern is about the school or some aspect of the school more generally, or about a particular member of staff, or is an exceptionally sensitive matter, then the parent should contact a senior member of staff - Head of EYFS/Deputy Head, or if it is about either of these two members of staff the Head teacher.

Concerns such as these will be dealt with within 5 working school days.

If the matter of concern is of a safeguarding nature, then please contact the designated safeguarding lead – Mrs D Vinsome, and/or Mrs G Griffiths (EYFS) who will immediately take whatever action is necessary.

Where all reasonable attempts to resolve a concern at **an informal level** have failed and a parent is not satisfied with the response, a complaint should be escalated and made **in writing** to escalate it to a formal level within 10 working school days.

2. Formal Complaints

A parent wishing to make a **formal** complaint should:

- 1.(a) have already followed the procedure detailed above regarding informal approaches and
- (b) submit the complaint, and the grounds for it, to the Head Teacher, **in writing**, stating clearly that they are not satisfied with the response they have had at trying to deal with the matter informally and why they now wish the matter to be dealt with by formal procedure.

2. To the extent warranted by the nature of the complaint, the matter will be thoroughly investigated, and possible implications and solutions considered. Investigations will be overseen by the senior management lead by the Head teacher. All parties are expected to co-operate with the investigation and should expect to be required to give the necessary amount of time (which may be substantial) to assist with these investigations.
3. Once investigations are complete, a meeting between relevant parties and conducted by the Head Teacher will (unless impractical due to school holidays etc - in which case it will be held as soon as is practicable on return of school) be held within **15** working school days of the receipt of the formal complaint. Each party may be accompanied by one other person at this meeting. This meeting may be held in person or virtually.

Notwithstanding the possibility of yet further investigation being required, the ultimate purpose of such a meeting is to try to obtain a resolution at that stage.

4. Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, as far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, of which the complainant, and, if appropriate, the person complained about, would be advised, with reasons and any recommendations, in writing.

(Please note: a parent wishing to make a formal complaint about the Head Teacher should follow the above procedure, but submit the written complaint to the Chair of Governors, who will be responsible for ensuring that the formal complaint is dealt with in accordance with the procedure above, but by a person or people appropriate to the Head Teacher's case).

5. A parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint should proceed to stage 3 of the process and initiate a formal appeal panel hearing by asking for this in writing within **10** working school days.

***Please note timescale for EYFS are different – see appendix 1**

3. Formal Appeals

1. A formal appeal should be submitted in writing, with a clear statement of the grounds on which consideration of an appeal is requested, to the Chair of Governors.
2. The need for a formal appeal will be considered and, as necessary, a panel will be convened of **at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters that were subject to complaint** – usually comprised of 2 governors, and one of these individuals being **independent** of the management and running of the school.
3. The Chair of the panel will then acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as is practicable, within **20** working school days of the receipt of the complaint for a formal appeal hearing.
4. Each party is entitled to be accompanied by one other person at this hearing. This accompanying person might be a relative, teacher or friend.
5. The panel will set a date within **5** working school days prior to the hearing, by which each party declares if he/she wishes to be accompanied and, if so, by whom.

6. The panel will also require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars should be supplied to all parties by a date set by the panel, but at least **10** working school days prior to the hearing.
7. Parents are expected to attend any formal appeal hearing themselves. If they do not attend the hearing, this will still take place without them and be thoroughly investigated by the panel members and a written record kept of such a meeting, within the time frame stated above.
8. Wherever possible, the panel will resolve the complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how this should be carried out and relevant parties informed on the day.
9. After due consideration of all the facts deemed relevant by the panel, and as soon as is practicable -within **15** working school days, the panel's decision, with reasons, together with any recommendations, will be made available in writing to the relevant parties, including (where appropriate) the person complained about, as well as the complainant and the Head Teacher.
10. The panel's decision will be final.
11. A **written record** will be kept of all complaints and resolution following those made in writing under the formal procedure and/or panel hearing
12. Any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld or not) will be recorded and kept confidentially by the head teacher to be made available on request where appropriate.
13. Any correspondence, statements and records relating to the complaint will be kept **confidential** for 7 years. With regard to safeguarding concerns these will be kept indefinitely.
14. Actions taken with regard to informal concerns/complaints will be recorded through ISAMS

Note:

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

***EYFS : Please note timescales for complaints relating to EYFS are different:
Written complaints must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days of the investigation. (appendix 1)***

Record of the complaints must be available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

HH will make available details of how to contact OFSTED and ISI if parents believe that EYFS requirements are not being met.

Parents are aware that they can contact OFSTED on 0300 123 1231

ISI can be contacted 020 7600 0100

This policy is available in written format from the school office for all parents.

Records of figures for any formal complaints are available on request from the Head teacher

APPENDIX 1 – EYFS Timescale for complaints :

These must be dealt with, within **28 days** – hence timescales will be different from above :

Expressions of Concern or Informal Complaints

Concerns such as these will be dealt with within **5** working school days.

Where all reasonable attempts to resolve a concern at an **informal level** have failed and a parent is not satisfied with the response, a complaint should be escalated and made **in writing** to escalate it to a **formal level** within **3** working school days.

Formal Level

Once investigations are complete, a meeting between relevant parties and conducted by the Head Teacher will (unless impractical due to school holidays etc - in which case it will be held as soon as is practicable on return of school) be held within **5** working school days of the receipt of the formal complaint

A parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint should proceed to stage 3 of the process and initiate a formal appeal panel hearing by asking for this in writing within **3** working school days.

Formal Appeals

The Chair of the panel will then acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as is practicable, within **5** working school days of the receipt of the complaint for a formal appeal hearing.

The panel will set a date within **3** working school days prior to the hearing, by which each party declares if he/she wishes to be accompanied and, if so, by whom.

The panel will also require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars should be supplied to all parties by a date set by the panel, but at least **5** working school days prior to the hearing.

After due consideration of all the facts deemed relevant by the panel, and as soon as is practicable -within **7** working school days, the panel's decision, with reasons, together with any recommendations, will be made available in writing to the relevant parties, including (where appropriate) the person complained about, as well as the complainant and the Head Teacher.

Status: Hunter Hall School will always follow a fair and effective procedure in the event of a complaint being made.

Flexibility: The school may amend this procedure from time to time.

Vexatious and time-wasting complaints: These are serious matters and may result in serious action being taken by the school in respect of vexatious and time-wasting complainants. Such serious action may include legal action and/or ending the school's contract with the vexatious or time-wasting parent (resulting in the child having to leave the school).

Non-prejudice: No person will be penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint when this is done in good faith.

Proper consideration and confidentiality: Any concern or complaint (whether formal or informal) that is not deemed to be vexatious or time-wasting will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record will be kept, with dates and with notes of the level at which resolution was reached, of any complaint and of any meetings, interviews, statements or correspondence arising in relation to a complaint. These will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by regulation/law and will remain available for inspection in school by the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors.

This policy is available in written format from the school office for all parents and is also available on the school portal

Next update : October 2022