

COPTHILL SCHOOL

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

“At Copthill we believe in an 'Open Door' policy, and we welcome the opportunity to talk to Parents at any time. We believe in solving the small problems to prevent the large ones. The Staff will always do their utmost to make every child's time at Copthill happy and successful.” *Copthill School Prospectus*

Staff are always accessible to and approachable by Parents. Issues raised by Parents are taken seriously and handled professionally and swiftly.

Definitions:

The Parent/s - those who have parental responsibility for the pupil. This may be a parent or legal guardian or a relative with direct responsibility for the pupil.

School – a person employed by, or under contract with Copthill School Ltd or any person acting under authorisation of the Directors of Copthill School Ltd.

Concern

A ‘concern’ may be treated as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

Complaint

A complaint may be generally recognised as ‘an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

This policy makes no direct distinction between a concern or a complaint. “Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint, and in the scope of this procedure.” ISI Part 7 2015

An effective complaints procedure can diffuse problems and can provide the school with helpful information. Complaints treated as constructive suggestions can be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for further complaint. Even an unjustified complaint may indicate an area which can be improved.

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Introduction

If parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the following procedure. **Failure to adhere may affect any consideration for the waiving of usual terms and conditions.**

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form teacher or relevant member of staff (ie Subject Leader). In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher / staff member cannot resolve the matter alone, or if approached about a matter which lies outside their remit, staff should refer it to the appropriate person or consult their Department Head and inform the parents of this action.

Parents may wish to raise certain concerns directly with the Department Head / Headteacher, and this should be respected. However complaints made directly to the Department Head or Headteacher may be referred back to the relevant Form Teacher/Subject Leader unless the Department Head or Headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with matter personally.

The Form Teacher/Subject Leader/ Department Head / Headteacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. An attempt must be made to make immediate contact to acknowledge the concern (within **3** working days) and aiming to resolve the matter completely within **10 working days**. In the event that the staff member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution 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 by staff and /or the Headteacher, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher or Principal. The Headteacher / Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the Headteacher / Principal will meet / speak to the parents concerned, normally within **5 working days** of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage. This process must be completed within **28** days from receipt of the complaint.

It may be necessary for the Headteacher / Principal to carry out further investigations. The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher / Principal 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 Headteacher / Principal will also give reasons for the decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. There may be certain circumstances, such as complaints about the Principal, when the parents should write direct to the Directors. Stage 3 of this Procedure will then be invoked.

Stage 3-Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), the Principal must write to the Parents within 7 working days, confirming that the matter has been referred to the Directors who will 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 Directors. The Chair of the Complaints Panel on behalf of the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 days. The Chair of the Complaints Panel should request that a letter be sent by the Parents to the Panel, outlining the complaint and containing any further information. Copies of such letters or any related matters shall be supplied to all parties not later than 10 working days prior to the hearing.

**Complaints Panel – Minimum of three persons - composed of a members of the Advisory Panel and at least one independent panel member. The directors have contacted a small 'pool' of independent members who have agreed to act as Panel members if required.*

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 reach a decision and may make recommendations which it shall complete within 5 working days of the Hearing, and at the very latest within 28 days as required under EYFS regulations. 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, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Directors and, where relevant, the person complained of and will be available for inspection on the school premises.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The Directors will provide Ofsted [and ISI], on request, with a written record of all Early Years complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

If all actions have been taken by the School, and the Parent still feels that the resolution is unsatisfactory, then a formal complaint can also be made to one of the following organizations:

ISI - Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100 or Email: concerns@isi.net

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

EARLY YEARS ONLY

Applications, Regulatory and Contact (ARC) Team Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

suggested method is now online <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Reviewed by Advisory Panel / Directors – Mar 2019

Formal Complaints History

Defining Stage 2 complaints

*If parents seek a formal meeting with the head, or raise issues through a formal letter, which may require a written response from the school, this would normally be regarded as a formal complaint, even if it has not been referred to as such in the letter. Also, if a concern about a more minor matter is repeated and the parent is clearly not satisfied with the school's original response, it should be regarded as a complaint. **ISI Briefing 2019***

2018-9 – 2 complaints reached Stage 2-Formal Resolution

Complaints Record

A formal record of all complaints are kept as follows:

Stage 1 - Log of all concerns / complaints passed to any SMT member – Secure shared Google Doc

Stage 2 - Formal complaints record – complaints folder. The record will state whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and action taken by the school as a result of these complaints.

Teachers and Dept Heads must also keep their own notes on the concern discussions and the actions which have been taken.

Definitions:

Stage 1: Any initial concern/complaint verbally made or via email or letter

Response: Complaint must be handled sensitively and dealt with immediately – either through an appropriate interview / telephone call or email response

Stage 2: A formal letter regarding a complaint being made against the school or a member of staff – “where the parent is not satisfied with the response on an informal basis –the complaint will be made in writing and the formal procedure will be invoked.”

Formal Recorded complaints – A formal complaint which is not resolved adequately at stage 1 of the complaints procedure

Formal Resolution – Stage 2: In most cases the Principal will meet / speak to the parents concerned, normally within **5 working days** of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. This process must be completed within **28** days from receipt of the complaint.