



Parental Complaints Procedure and Policy

Approved by: Rob Pritchard

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Parental Complaints Procedure and Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to all concerns and complaints other than:

- **Child Protection** issues and
- **Exclusions** where separate procedures apply.

This policy complies with Schedule 1, Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (Effective 5th January, 2015).

Timescales

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales are indicated in relevant sections of this policy.

Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint by a parent/carer is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of resolving the issue in a transparent manner.

The Seeds School expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and guarantees to treat seriously and confidentially all concerns whether raised informally or formally.

Policy Statement

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that, a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly, can soon become a cause of resentment, which could be damaging to relationships. We intend that parents and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at the Seeds School. The policy, however, distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally, and a formal complaint which will require further investigation.

Stage 1 – Informal Concerns

1. Concerns

Most concerns, where a Parent/Carer seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching, disciplinary matters or issues outside the classroom. Parents/Carers should raise the concern initially with the School Office personally, via telephone, website (Contact Us – tab) or email as appropriate.

It is usual for concerns to be resolved very quickly, within 24 hours. However, should this not be possible then the school will do everything possible to ensure that informal concerns are resolved within 10 working days of being raised.

2. Unresolved Concerns

A concern, which has not been resolved by informal means, can be notified as a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below.

3. Record Concerns

In the case of concerns raised under Stage 1 of this procedure, the only record of the concern and its resolution will be file notes by the person dealing with the complaint and/or file correspondence between the person raising the concern and the respondent. Informal concerns and resolutions are not recorded separately.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

4. Notification

An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or a more serious dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details for the attention of Rob Pritchard, Headteacher or Steve Knight, Proprietor. (Please see Appendices.)

5. Acknowledgement

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing normally within 3 working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

6. Investigation and Resolution

The Headteacher/Proprietor may deal with the matter personally or delegate a senior member of staff to act as 'investigating officer'. The 'investigating officer' may request additional information from the complainant and will fully investigate the issue. In most cases the Headteacher or investigating officer will meet or speak with the parent/carer to discuss the matter.

7. Outcome

The aim is to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 15 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received during a school holiday or within 15 working days of the end of term or half term may take longer to resolve.

8. Record of Complaints

Written records will be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

9. Unresolved Complaints

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint they have their complaint considered by an Independent Complaints Panel.

Stage 3 – Complaint Heard by the Complaints Panel

10. Request

A request for a complaint to be heard by a Complaints Panel (an appeal) must be made in writing and within 10 working days of the date of the School's decision made at Stage 2. This request should be made to Robert Pritchard – Headteacher (by letter or e-mail) including a copy of the original written complaint and also indicating which matters remain unresolved. No new complaint may be included. Upon receipt of the written complaint it will be forwarded to The Trustees of the School.

11. Acknowledgment

Where an appeal is received, the Operations Manager, Verity Brown, will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. The Clerk will acknowledge, in writing, receipt of the appeal and inform the complainant of the steps involved in the process. The Clerk will be the contact point for the complainant.

12. Panel Hearing

The Clerk will aim to convene an Appeal Panel hearing as soon as possible, normally no later than 20 working days after receipt of the Stage 3 request.

13. Panel Membership

The Panel will consist of two Trustees who have not previously been involved in the complaint and one person independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel will select its own Chair.

14. The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The Panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

15. Attendance

The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written evidence and address the Panel;

- The parents/carers and/or one representative.
- The Headteacher/Proprietor and/or one representative.
- Any other person who the Complaints Panel considers to have reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision making.

16. Evidence

All parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position including;

- Documents.
- Chronology and key dates.
- Written statements setting out further detail.

The evidence will be considered by the Panel along with the initial submission.

All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than 5 working days in advance of the Panel Hearing. The Clerk will distribute the evidence to all parties no later than 3 working days in advance of the Panel Hearing.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

All panels considering complaints must be clerked. The Clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- Record the proceedings;
- Notify all parties of the panel's decisions.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- Parents or others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

18. Decision

The Panel will reach a decision, and make any recommendations within 10 working days of the hearing. The decision reached is final.

19. Notification of the Panel's Decision

The Panel's findings will be sent, in writing, to the Clerk, to the Parents/Carers, the Headteacher and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The letter will state the reasons for the decision reached and any recommendations made by the Panel.

Appendix 1: Checklist for a Panel Hearing

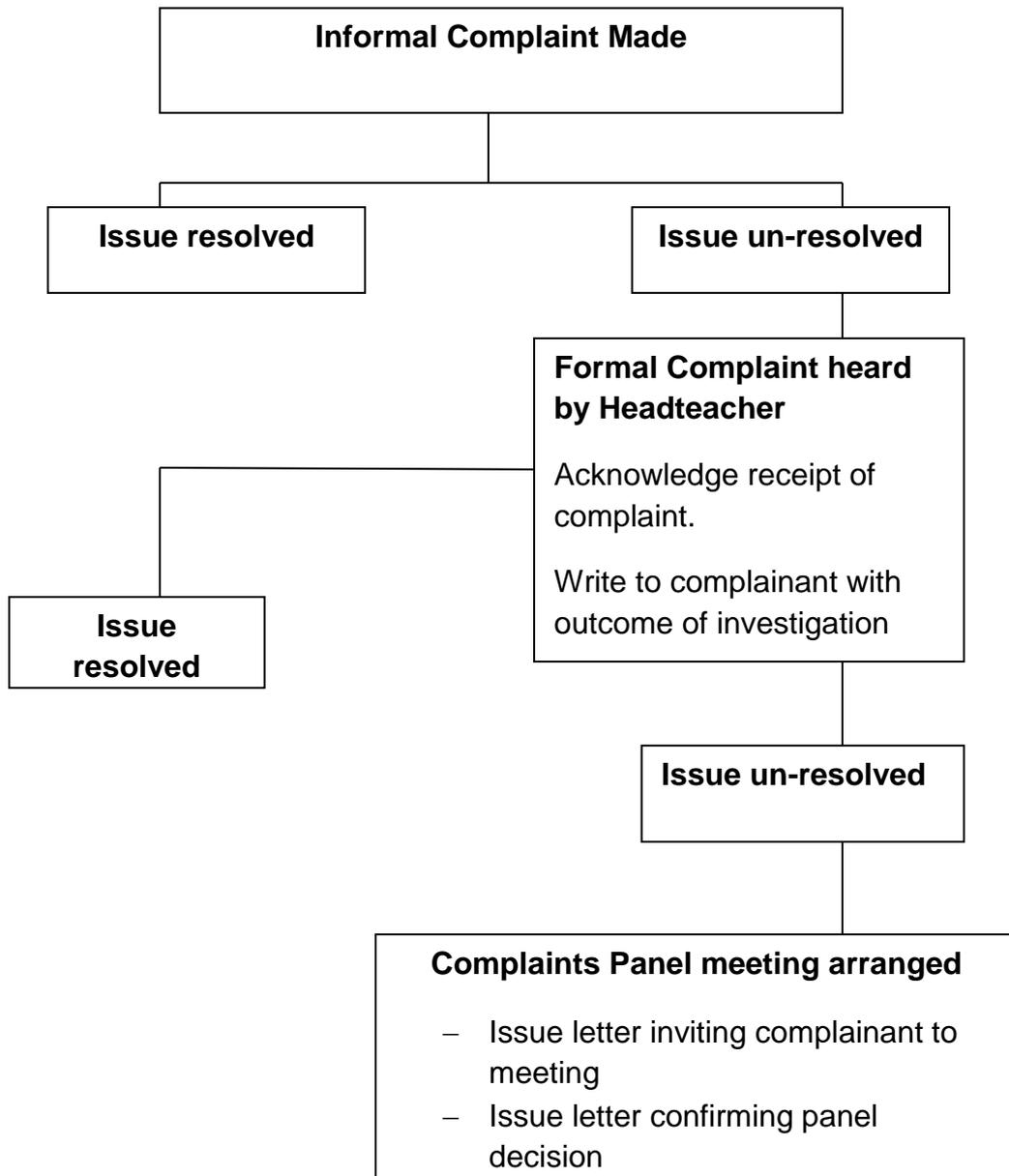
Appendix 2: Summary of Dealing with complaints

Appendix 3: Complaint Form

APPENDIX 1 – Checklist for a Panel Hearing

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the School's actions and be followed by the School's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the Panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within a set time-scale.

APPENDIX 2 - Summary of Dealing with Complaints



APPENDIX 3

The Seeds School – Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Verity Brown (Operations Manager) who will acknowledge receipt and explain the complaints process.

Your Name:

Pupil's Name:

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant): _____

Address:

Telephone number (day):

Telephone number (evening): _____

Please give brief details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was their response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details

Signature: _____
(Complainant)

Date: _____