

Complaints Procedure for Parents Policy

Leehurst Swan School



Approved by:	 Headmaster  Chair of Governors	Date: 4/09/2019
Last reviewed on:	4/09/2019	
Next review due by:	4/09/2021	

1. Aim of Policy

Leehurst Swan welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, guardians and pupils and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. Our reputation is important and it is in the interest of the school to deal with any concerns promptly. This policy is made available to all parents on request and is sent with the joining instructions to all new parents of the school. This Policy applies to the whole school and the EYFS, and is published on the school website for parents.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents and pupils wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we take action where appropriate.

2. Complaints Procedure

“How should I complain?”

1 Informal Complaints Procedure

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Pupils should raise all complaints with their form teacher or pastoral stage co-ordinator in the first instance. In the case of parents, any member of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. They may be able to sort things out quickly with the minimum of fuss. You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter or telephone. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a different member of staff such as the Pastoral Co-ordinator or a Head of Department. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. The member of staff concerned will keep a written record of your complaint and the date on which it was received.

“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.”

The school is here for you and your child and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff as described above.

“I am not sure whether to complain or not.”

If as parents’ you have concerns you are entitled to complain. If in doubt you should contact the school as we are here to help.

“What will happen next?”

If you raise something face to face or by telephone it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you have made a complaint via e-mail, we will contact you within 5 school days, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given an indication of when you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible and usually within seven working days. This will tell you the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.

“What happens about confidentiality?”

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmaster and those directly involved, except in the circumstances required by law or school inspection.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the Police. You would be informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered. Should the matter not be resolved to your satisfaction within 7 school days then parents are to advance to the formal complaints stage of this procedure.

2 Formal Complaints Procedure

If you are not satisfied with the outcome you should write or email in the first instance to the Headmaster. The school recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and alternative communication preferences will be accommodated in any stage of the complaints procedure.

The Headmaster will speak to the parents within 7 school days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. Written records will be kept by the Headmaster of all meetings and interviews with regard to the complaint. Once all the relevant facts have been established,

a decision will be made by the Headmaster and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The reasons for the decision will also be given.

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should write to the Chair of Governors directly. The Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors may interview staff and will wish to meet with the complainant to discuss matters. Once the facts have been established, the complainants will be informed of the decision of the Chair of Governors in writing.

If at any stage in the complaints procedure, there is no response from the complainants within a month, the matter is assumed to be closed and resolved.

“What happens if I am still not happy?”

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may wish to write directly to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman will call for a full report from the Headmaster and will examine matters fully before responding; usually this response will be within a month of receipt of your letter or email. This may result in a positive solution but if it does not, the Chairman will invite you to a meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend. Legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

“Can I take the matter further?”

3 Panel Hearing

If the meeting does not bring about a resolution, the matter would be referred to the School’s Conciliation Committee, a Panel as directed by the Personnel Committee of the Governors. This will consist of at least 3 people who are not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint and at least one member independent of the management and running of the school. Such independent members should be used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. If possible, they will have some standing in the community. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Personnel Committee of the Governors.

It is the task of the Panel to look at issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Panel Convener will invite you to a meeting of the Panel as soon as practicable and within 14 school days. You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. Copies of these papers shall be supplied to all parties not less than 7 school days prior to the hearing. As with the Chairman’s meeting, you will be invited to bring a friend with you, however legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

The outcome of this meeting will be communicated to you immediately, if possible, otherwise within 7 school days. The Panel will write or email, informing you of its decision and the reasons for it. Also the Panel’s findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

4 External Authorities

All parents are also entitled to refer a complaint unresolved after panel hearing to an external authority. ISI is the inspecting authority for Independent Schools. Parents with children in EYFS (reception class) may also refer the unresolved complaint to the regulatory authority, Ofsted. The contact details for both organisations are:

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Telephone 0207 600 0100

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 123 1231

3. Complaints Record Keeping

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised*
- Name of parent*
- Name of pupil*
- Description of the issue*
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)*
- Witness statements (if appropriate)*
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage*
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)*

In line with external authority guidelines for the recording of formal complaints, all will be kept on file for 3 years and if requested by authorities the school will provide a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of the complaint.

All data stored for the purposes of complaint record keeping will comply with legislation in the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR and comply with obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 200 and the Equality Act 2010.

4. Confidentiality and Disclosure

The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care. Parents

can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except to the extent required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent school Standards) (England) regulations 2003, by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection (section 162A) or under any other legal obligation that prevails.

5. Log of Formal Complaints

Formal Complaints Registered in Academic Year	Resolution/Stage
2018-2019 - 2	1 Resolution - Formal Stage (Head/Governors) 1 Unresolved - Panel Hearing
2017-2018 - 0	
2016-2017 - 1	Resolution - Formal Stage (Head)