



Solefield School

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Solefield School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, pupils and any other person with an interest in the school or its activities. We take seriously complaints and concerns that may arise. This policy will show you how to use our complaints system. This policy applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception class), and to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. It is available on the open part of the school's website and is also available to parents (both prospective and current) from the school office.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

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

We wish to ensure that:

- parents 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

ANY MATTER ABOUT WHICH A PARENT OF A PUPIL IS UNHAPPY AND SEEKS ACTION BY THE SCHOOL IS A "COMPLAINT".

In most cases, parents may wish for their complaint to be considered on an informal basis and the school is very happy to deal with these. The school keeps a record of informal complaints to enable patterns of low-level concern to be monitored.

'How should I complain?

You can talk directly to a member of staff or governor, email, write a letter, or telephone. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

Any member of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, to raise academic or social matters with the Form Teacher, sports concerns with the Director of Sport. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, a Deputy Head or the Headmistress. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

‘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. We deal with all matters of this kind in a similar way and treat them as “complaints”. This ensures that the school deals with them within a specific timeframe and that they are taken seriously. Please 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. The Headmistress’ door is always open, and we value all feedback as it usually helps us improve the school.

Complaints Procedure – 3 stages

‘Stage 1’

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, we will contact you within five working days. In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. We will respond to your concerns and explain the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

‘What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?’

‘Stage 2’

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, please put your complaint in writing to the Head or Chair of Governors. You may then choose one of three options:

1. A formal meeting with the Headmistress within five working days of your request. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate. The Headmistress will write to you within five working days of the meeting with a conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.
2. The Headmistress will refer the matter to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman will call for a full report from the Head and will examine matters thoroughly before responding within five working days with a conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.
3. You may request a meeting with the Chairman of Governors to take place within five working days. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate. The Chairman of Governors will write to you within five working days of the meeting with a conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

‘What if I am still not satisfied with the outcome?’

‘Stage 3’

If **'Stage 2'** does not bring about a resolution, the matter would be referred to the School's Conciliation Committee who will meet within five working days of notification. It is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Conciliation Committee will comprise at least three and up to five Governors (not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint) including the Convener and at least one person independent of the management and running of the school. Our current "independent person" is Hugh Mercer KC. The Committee Convener will invite you to a meeting. You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. As with the Headmistress' and Chairman's meeting, you will be invited to bring a friend with you. The allowance for parents to attend and be accompanied at a hearing does not entitle parents to insist on legal representation at a hearing.

The findings and recommendations of the committee will be

(i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant within five working days and, where relevant, to the person complained about;

(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmistress and Chairman of Governors;

A written record of all complaints and the action taken is kept for at least three years, whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a committee hearing, regardless of whether or not they are upheld. The school has not received any complaints reaching Stage 3 in the previous ten years up to the date of this policy.

We hope that we will be able to satisfy your concerns. If we do not, you may wish as a last resort to seek independent legal advice.

Timescales

Our Complaints procedure refers to "working days". If a complaint is made during a holiday period, best efforts will be made to resolve any issues as quickly as reasonably possible.

'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 Headmistress and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children.

We would point out that anonymous complaints will 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.

The school keeps a written record of all complaints that are made whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a committee hearing; and a record of any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential (in line with relevant data protection requirements) except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The Governing Body scrutinises complaints annually to identify trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Parents of pupils in EYFS

As we are an independent school, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is responsible for inspecting our Early Years Foundation Stage. However, in the event of any complaint to the school from which you may be dissatisfied with the outcome, you are entitled to contact ISI and Ofsted directly. Records must be made available to ISI and Ofsted.

ISI can be contacted regarding complaints on complaints@isi.net or by telephoning 0207 6000 100.

The leaflet: 'Complaints to Ofsted about Schools: Guidance for Parents', reference 080113 may be downloaded from www.ofsted.gov.uk This indicates the procedures for making a complaint.

A complaint may also be made directly to the DfE, using the following link:
https://form.education.gov.uk/service/contact_the_department_for_education

A complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

If the complaint relates to the use of personal data, the complainant may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (the ICO). Information about the kind of complaints the ICO can involve itself in can be found here.

If the complaint relates to the fundraising practices of the school, the complainant may complain to the Fundraising Regulator.

The school will always cooperate with a regulator if a complaint has been made in relation to the school.

If the school becomes aware that a complaint has been made about it to a regulator, the Governing Body will consider submitting a serious incident report to the Charity Commission.

The school recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the pupils in our care.

There were no complaints registered under the formal procedure for the academic year 2022-23.

Helen McClure & Governors
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