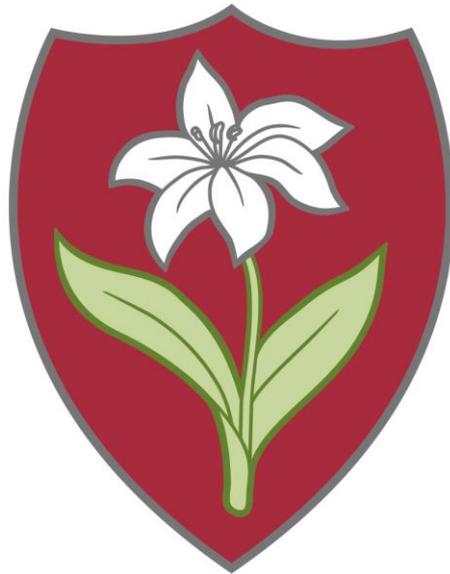


**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
For Parents**



THE ELMS

EST 1614

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Parents)

(For Early Years Foundation Stage, Pre-Prep and Main School)

The Complaints procedure is divided into three sections or stages:

- Informal
- Formal
- Panel Hearing.

The detailed format is outlined below.

The complaints procedure is provided as part of the contract between parents and the school.

Formal written complaints are to be addressed to:

The Headmaster,
The Elms School,
Colwall,
Malvern,
Worcestershire
WR13 6EF.

Written complaints invoking Stage 3 are to be addressed to

Chairman of Governors
The Elms School,
Colwall,
Malvern,
Worcestershire
WR13 6EF

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

The Elms School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. The Elms makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and The Elms will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, The Elms will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Time Frame for Dealing with Complaints

Where timeframes are referred to in this document, they are regarded as targets rather than precise commitments. In particular, if a complaint is made during the holidays or not long before the end of a term, the timeframe may need to be extended.

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Stage 1 – Informal

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the member of staff directly concerned with the matter in question – e.g. form teacher, Housemaster, Matron, Housemother. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of department, the Deputy Head or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department, the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the member of staff directly concerned unless the head of department, the Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff directly concerned with the matter in question will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

Stage 2 – Formal

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will either meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 10 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chairman of Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Head.
- Findings and recommendations will be sent to the complainant by electronic mail or an alternative medium and a copy will be kept by the Headmaster.

Notes

The Chairman of Governors will normally act personally as outlined above. However, his or her functions in this Procedure may be carried out by another Governor nominated by the Chairman or by the governing body.

Where a complaint concerns Early Years pupils:

- The Elms will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.
- Parents can be assured that concerns and complaints will be treated appropriately.
- 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 when any other legal obligation prevails.
- Records of complaints will be kept for at least three years.
- Parents may contact OFSTED (Tel: 08456 404045) and/or ISI (Tel: 020 7776 8830) should they so wish.

Last reviewed: September 2017

Next review: September 2018