



FAIRSTEAD HOUSE

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Whole School	Website: Yes
Statutory?	Yes
Responsible:	SLT
Reviewed:	December 2021
Next Review:	December 2022



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COMPLAINTS POLICY **Including Early Years Foundation Stage**

Introduction

Fairstead House strives to provide the highest quality teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Policy.

This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils (including parents of pupils in the School's Early Years Foundation Stage) and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

Fairstead House School makes its complaints policy available to all parents of pupils on the school website and is available upon request from the School Office.

The School aims to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. Working days refers to Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. Where a complaint is received in the holiday period, timescales may need to be extended.

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. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, he/she may consult a Head of Key Stage, Nursery Manager or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred back to the relevant Form teacher and dealt with informally.
- The Form teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing but a record of the matter will be made.
- Should the matter not be resolved **within seven days** or in the event that the Form teacher 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 Policy.



Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, or the complaint requires investigation or involves dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies or management, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head and specify that this is a Stage 2 complaint.
- The full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned. All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged **within three working days** if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescale
- The Head may ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator. The Investigator(s) may request additional information from you and may wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Investigator(s) will prepare a report on the investigation, which will be considered by the Head.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. The Head will notify parents of this Stage 2 decision in writing **within 10 working days** from receipt of the formal complaint. The Head will also give reasons for their decision. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay the parents will be notified of this and be informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.
- Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of a term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel required for the investigation to be undertaken properly.
- If the complaint is about the Head, parents should write to the Chair of Governors, who will consider the complaint as a Stage 2 complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Policy.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

- If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2, Formal Resolution, then the parents should put their complaint in writing and specify that this is a Stage 3 complaint.
- If Stage 3 is invoked, the matter will be referred to the clerk to the governors, who has been appointed by the governors to call hearing of the complaints panel.
- A Complaints Panel Hearing (Hearing) is a review of the decisions taken by the Head (or the Chair of Governors, in circumstances where the formal complaint concerns the Head) at Stage 2. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint that have not been previously raised and addressed under Stage 2 of the complaints policy.



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- The role of the Complaints Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints and the decisions that have been made to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is upheld or not.
- The Panel will consider:
 - the documents provided by both parties;
 - the representations made by the Parents and the Head;
- The Complaints Panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.

How to Request a Hearing

- Requests for a Hearing must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors. It is expected that the complaints policy will progress in a timely manner. The request will only be considered if the complainant has completed Stages 1 and 2.
- The complainant must ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and their full contact details accompany the letter to the Clerk.
- The letter must state the outcome that the complainant desires
- The complaint must be accompanied by a list of the documents which the complainant believes to be in the School's possession and wishes the Panel to see.
- The request should include whether the complainant wishes to be accompanied to the Hearing. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Clerk to the Governors of this who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- The Clerk will acknowledge the request in writing **within four working days** during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays.
- Every effort will be made to enable the Hearing to take place **within 15 working days** of receipt of the request. However, parents should note that the Complaints Panel will not normally sit during half term or school holidays.

Planning the Hearing

- As soon as reasonably practicable the Clerk to the Governors will liaise with each party to establish a suitable date, time and place for the Hearing, confirming details in writing.
- Copies of any documents you wish the Complaints Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to be received at least five working days prior to the Hearing.
- The complainant(s) will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative or friend. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and so legal representation is not appropriate.
- Parents should note that the Complaints Panel will wish to speak to the parents directly. Any person accompanying will not be permitted to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
- The Clerk to the Governors will circulate a copy of all the documents to be considered by the Complaints Panel to all parties at least **three working days** prior to the hearing.



Composition of the Complaints Panel

- The Panel will normally consist of at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. Two members of the panel will be on the board of governors of the school. One member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The Complaints Panel members will appoint one of themselves to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings.

The Hearing

- The Parties will normally be seen separately by the Panel.
- The Parties shall have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate matter.
- A clerk appointed by the Complaints Panel will take minutes of the proceedings.
- All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair.
- Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.
- Where further investigation is required, the Chair may, at his/her discretion, decide how it should be carried out including an adjournment to consider next steps.
- A Hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statement about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceedings shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.
- Where possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation.

The Decision

- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities (unless there is an agreed position) and may make recommendations, which it shall complete **within 7 days** of the Hearing.
- The Panel will write to the complainants, and where relevant, the person complained about, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Governing Body and the Head.
- The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's Complaints Policy.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality



- The School provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Complaints Panel Hearing, including the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). All records of Stage 2 and 3 complaints will be kept by the school for a minimum of seven years.
- 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 the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requires access to them.
- Correspondence, statement and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is required by the Secretary of State or where disclosures are required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority.
- A complaint about the fulfilment of the School's EYFS requirements will be made available to Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate on request.

Number of Complaints registered under the formal procedure during the School year 2020-2021 is: 0

Complaints to Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Parents of pupils in the EYFS setting will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage parents have the further option to make a complaint to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they believe that the school is not meeting EYFS requirements. The contact details are below:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI can be contacted on 02076000100 or by email: concerns@isi.net