

## **Policy: Complaints Statement and Procedure**

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### **Mission Statement**

At Abbey School and Nursery our aim is to teach to inspire, motivate and nurture the next generation of creative and critical thinkers. We work in partnership with parents and the community to achieve the highest standards. Our main goal is to encourage our children to be resilient, respectful, responsible independent learners, equipped for lifelong learning. Through stimulating, safe learning environments and excellent opportunities to succeed in and out of the classroom, we encourage children’s progress and achievements.

## Our Core Values

RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, RESILIENCE

These 3 core values underpin the ethos of Abbey School and Nursery. Our young pupils are encouraged to understand these values and how they develop, initially, at the micro level around themselves, their friendships, their families and our school. Later, our older pupils begin to understand how these self-same values affect our lives on the macro level, with all this means for their lives as they grow into adults and their environment of Devon, the United Kingdom, and also the planet in which we live.

## Statutory Policies

This procedure is based upon guidance issued by the DfES (LEA/0180/2003). In discharging their duties, those dealing with complaints must observe the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant rights-based legislation and conventions.

The School is required under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 to adopt, make available, and apply a complaints procedure. In order to comply with the Standards against which OFSTED/ISI inspections will be carried out. 'Complaints' are not defined in the Independent School Standards Regulations, but the guidance for maintained schools suggests that there is a difference between 'concerns' which should be dealt with informally and 'complaints', which should be subject to a formal procedure i.e. it cannot be easily resolved by the intervention of a Senior Manager.

This policy concerns complaints from parents and pupils. The policy does not cover complaints from members of staff as these are covered by The School's grievance procedures.

You cannot complain directly to a private school if you do not have a child at The School.

## What Constitutes a Complaint

For clarity, in this procedure, when reference is made to 'Abbey School' or 'The School', this also includes our Nursery department.

A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that The School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

A formal complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem that the complainant is prepared to address in writing. It may be made about The School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent of a registered pupil is unhappy and seeks action by The School is within the scope of this procedure.

Parents can be assured that all 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 or your child raises in good faith.

## Types of Concerns and Complaints

The majority of concerns/complaints will fall into the following categories:

- Financial and administrative;
- Academic (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- Pastoral care (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of the child etc); or
- Child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).

## Make a complaint

Follow The School's complaints procedure - every school in England must have one. Ours is published on The School's website and can be obtained from The School office. It tells you what kind of complaints The School will deal with.

## Rationale

This policy makes use of the procedures set out in the Independent Schools Council (ISC) guidance 'ISC Model Complaints Procedure', and the DfE guidance on Complaints Procedures for maintained schools, but adds further elements to turn them into a model policy for independent schools. This policy applies to Abbey School and Nursery.

## COMPLAINTS STATEMENT

We feel it is important for parents of our children to get to know the staff members as quickly as possible. In this way barriers between parents and carers can be overcome. We are all aware that your child is the most precious part of your life, and we feel privileged to be chosen as their teachers and carers.

When things do go wrong, and they will from time to time, we would like to know about it. The vast majority of any concern you will ever have while your child is in our School will no doubt be resolved by a simple and quiet word with the class teacher, or the teacher concerned. Should you wish to have further guidance on how to settle any unresolved issues, we have a tried and tested system through which we resolve problems. If your initial concern has not been resolved by a teacher and you wish to take a complaint further, we have a Complaints Policy and a three stage Complaints Procedure to initiate to help to resolve your complaint. It starts with informal stages and leads to a formal stage.

There were 2 complaints received during the academic year 2020 – 2021

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Abbey School and Nursery seeks to find ways of continually improving its educational provision for pupils. We welcome comments, both positive and negative, and view them as valuable information, which can help us to maintain and improve standards.

- Most complaints are initially addressed verbally to the main teacher or carer of your child and the procedure itemised below will most likely afford satisfaction. You may prefer to telephone The School Office first on 01803 327868; the Secretary's will arrange for you to speak to the staff member directly concerned.
- Following this intervention, should the problem remain unresolved, it will be referred to The Pastoral Team.
- Failure to have a satisfactory outcome at this stage will result in a formal, written complaint being dealt with by the Head Teacher.
- All complaints will be recorded and investigated on an individual basis. All such records will be kept confidential.
- Any trends identified will be addressed so that corrective action may be taken to improve standards and lead to improved provision.

## Time Scale

Any complaints received by Abbey School or EYFS will be acknowledged within 5 working days. 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 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

## **Abbey School & EYFS**

Any complaint received by our EYFS will be investigated within 28 days and a record of the complaint will be available for Ofsted and ISI.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

In relation to all complaints, parents will be kept informed where The School requires reasonable additional time for investigations to be carried out.

### **RAISING a CONCERN with OFSTED or ISI**

If you wish to raise a concern about an EYFS setting, OFSTED can be contacted via:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

If you wish to raise a concern about an independent school, ISI can be contacted via:

[concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or call 020 7600 0100

## **Please see next page for our 3-step Complaints Procedure**

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### INFORMAL STAGE - Involvement of Form Teacher/Teacher involved

**Step 1** - When you feel uncomfortable about your child's wellbeing, no matter what the concern, please approach the teacher involved / class teacher / main carer and air your concern. Do not delay, as delays in school make it difficult to accurately retrace incident or event. We will listen carefully to what you have to say and try to resolve your problem informally and quickly, and where possible within two working days.

- The matter may quickly and easily be dealt with verbally
- A written record is made of the complaint
- A record will be made of how and when a complaint is resolved
- All records and any correspondence pertaining to them, are kept confidential

### SENIOR STAFF STAGE - Involvement of Pastoral Team or member of the Senior Leadership Team

**Step 2** - If you consider your concern has not been resolved by the process outlined in Step 1 above, please approach the Pastoral Team (Senior Leadership & Safeguarding Team). A note will be taken of your concerns, the matter will be investigated, and you will receive a response to your concerns indicating how we intend to address the issues you have raised. This process may take up to one school week as frequently the staff involved will need to gather and verify information in addition to carrying out a normal working day.

Should you not wish to meet the Pastoral Team (Senior Leadership & Safeguarding Team), they will be happy to receive your written complaint. Where appropriate, within one week of approaching one of these senior members of staff putting your complaint in writing to them, you will receive a written response outlining your concern and the steps we have taken and will take in the future, to address the issues you have raised.

It is the Headteacher's policy to remain separate from the preliminary complaints procedures indicated above in step one and two, and to deal only with incidents that have not been successfully resolved by other members of staff.

### FORMAL STAGE - Involvement of The Headteacher

**Step 3** - If you consider your concern has not been resolved by the process outlined in Steps 1 and 2 above, then our Headteacher will be pleased to meet you to discuss the matter. Sometimes the intervention of the Headteacher has been known to diffuse the situation at this point, by speaking with or writing to the complainant and reassuring him or her that The School has taken the complaint seriously.

### INVOLVEMENT OF THE PANEL – Panel Stage

Should, however, this prove not to be the case, the Headteacher will convene a Headteacher's Complaints Appeal Panel, normally within 20 school days, to which the complainant will be invited.

- The Panel will consist of 3 persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, being the Headteacher and two others, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of The School. The Headteacher, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working 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 not later than 5 working 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. Unless the parents indicate that they are now satisfied with the Stage 2

## Abbey School & EYFS

resolution, the Panel hearing will go ahead notwithstanding that the parents may decide not to attend.

- 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, and in what timeframe, 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 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.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents, although they may recommend these actions to the Headteacher.

### The Panel's decision.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Headteacher. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on The School premises by The School's inspection body.

### Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by The School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). 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 and will be accessed only by relevant bodies in accordance with Data Protection. END

### RAISING a CONCERN with OFSTED or ISI

If you wish to raise a concern about an EYFS setting, OFSTED can be contacted via:

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If you wish to raise a concern about an independent school, ISI can be contacted via:

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