



Complaints Policy

This policy applies to:

Whole College parental body including EYFS

Person responsible for the policy:

Deputy Headmaster (Senior School)

Review dates:

Last review Sept 2018

Next review Sept 2019

Ardingly College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may arise if you are unhappy about a matter. This policy will show you how to use our complaints system.

Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage may use the procedure identified below. They may also raise concerns through an additional route identified in the final section of this document.

Parental Complaints Procedure

The College undertakes to deal with complaints as sympathetically and expeditiously as possible and to resolve them, either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students. The three stages of resolution (informal, formal and panel hearing) are explained in this policy.

There is a separate complaints procedure for students, and it may be that parents wish to invoke the parental complaints procedure if they are dissatisfied with the School's handling of a complaint by a student.

Pupils whose parents make complaints in good faith will not be penalised in any way.

The law requires the College to follow a clear procedure when a complaint is made. Because the investigation and response to a complaint can be so time-consuming, we ask parents who make a complaint to be clear, at the start of any letter or conversation, that they are making a formal complaint rather than an observation about some aspect of administration or welfare.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or inspecting body [under section 109 of the 2008 Act] requests access, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, or where other legal obligation prevails.

How to Complain

Education Matters

If the complaint relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please discuss it with your son's or daughter's Tutor or Housemaster or Housemistress (Form Tutor or subject teacher in the Prep School). They will then help you to put your concerns to the appropriate Head of Department/Director of Studies in the Prep School or Deputy Head (Academic) in the Senior School.

Pastoral Care

If the concern relates to a matter outside the classroom or in the house, please speak or write to the Housemaster or Housemistress (the Form Tutor or Head of Section in the Prep School) in the first instance. They will then put you in touch with the Deputy Head, or Headmaster if you wish.

Disciplinary Matters

A concern about disciplinary sanctions should be first raised with the Housemaster or Housemistress (Head of Section in the Prep School), who will put you in touch with the member of staff who imposed the sanction. If not resolved, then you should address your concern to the Deputy Head or Headmaster.

Financial Matters

A concern or complaint about the matter relating to fees or extras should be stated in writing to the Director of Operations. If not resolved promptly, please send a copy of the letter of complaint to the Headmaster.

Stages of Resolution

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 the Housemaster or Housemistress (Form Tutor or Head of Section in the Prep School). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight-away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal resolution

The Headmaster may delegate at this stage to another senior member of staff - normally the Deputy Head or Deputy Head (Academic). All references to Headmaster under Stage 2 shall, therefore, automatically be taken to include those named above.

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and how the College might improve its processes. The College keeps a written record of those procedures: should you wish to see these please contact the Headmaster's PA.

In most cases, the Headmaster (or his nominee) will meet or speak with parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. Every attempt will be made to reach a resolution at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Headmaster (or his nominee) to carry out further investigations.

The Headmaster (or his nominee) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster (or his nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Headmaster (or his nominee) will also give reasons for their decision and the Chairman may be called to mediate if necessary.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the parents remain dissatisfied, they should make an appeal in writing to the Chairman of the School Council within fourteen days of receipt of the written outcome c/o The Clerk to the Governors at the College's address.

When the Chairman is satisfied that he has all the necessary information, he will convene a panel of three people to hear the complaint, two of whom will be members of the College Council, other than the Chairman, and one of whom will be a person of standing, not involved in the College. This person will be independent from the management and running of the College and all members of the panel must have had no previous involvement with the matter being complained about.

The Chairman of the Council, on behalf of the panel, will acknowledge the request, and schedule a meeting to take place as soon as practicable, and normally within fifteen working days of the receipt of the appeal.

Any documents which are to be considered by the appeal panel will be disclosed to both parties, not later than five working days before the hearing.

Parents may be accompanied to the hearing, if they so wish, by the student concerned, and by one other person of their choice. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The Headmaster will not be present at the hearing, but may be invited to meet the panel afterwards, before they reach their decision.

At the hearing the appeal panel may consider evidence from any person who was involved in the decision under discussion, and any relevant documents pertaining to this decision.

The panel will try to resolve the parents' appeal immediately without need for further investigation. If further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the panel will consider its decision and any recommendation it may wish to take. The Clerk to the appeal panel will remain in attendance to record the panel's decision.

The Chairman of the Council will write to parents informing them of the panel's decision and the reasons for it within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the panel will be final.

The panel's finding and recommendations, if any, will also be sent in writing to the Headmaster, and where relevant the person complained about. The matter will be reported to the Council at their next meeting.

If Social Services need to be contacted their telephone number is: 01243 771000. Concerns may also be addressed to ISI (Tel No: 0207 600 0100).

Monitoring Complaints

A formal complaint registered on the College's Complaints Register is one that has been registered by a parent, pupil or third party and is encompassed by the College's Complaints Procedure for pupils or parents. By its nature a formal complaint is more serious and severe than an informal complaint or

concern. A complaint will normally, but not exclusively, be focused upon a person or persons associated with the College, their conduct or behaviour or will generally identify a perceived failure, error or breach of contract (in the broadest sense of the term) between the College and the complainant.

A written record will be kept of formal complaints, and whether they were resolved or proceeded to a panel hearing, as well as the action taken. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. Records of complaints will be kept for three years.

Complaints in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage may use the procedure identified above but they may also complain to Ofsted directly.

Complaints Procedure in Early Years

Complaints or concerns can be raised with the Head of Nursery or Head Teacher by contacting the school office (01444 893300).

Formal complaints may be directed to the Chair of Governors, Mr J. Sloane, c/o Ardingly College, Haywards Heath, West Sussex. RH17 6QS

Parents may contact Ofsted on Tel. No: 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Parents may also complain to ISI (tel. No. 0207 600 0100 or email info@isi.net).

The College will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfillment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

In the year 2017-18 the Senior School received 9 formal complaints, the Prep School 0 and the Pre-Prep 1.