

I.4 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Person(s) responsible:	Headmaster and Chair of Governors
Last updated:	December 2022
Review period:	24 months
Next review:	December 2024

Introduction

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils, both day and boarding. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure, which is available on the school website or on request to the School Office.

In accordance with paragraph 32 (1) (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Farleigh School 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.

Although this policy can be made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. 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.

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) raise in good faith.

The 3-Stage Complaint Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- I. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

2. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher, Head of Year or Head of Boarding. 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 the issue to be raised with the Deputy Head (Pastoral), Deputy Head (Academic) or Head of Pre Prep (for Pre Prep and Kindergarten children).
3. Complaints made directly to the Head, Deputy Head (Pastoral), Deputy Head (Academic) or Head of Pre-Prep will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless they deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
4. The member of staff will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 workingⁱ days, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution within 10 days, then parents will be advised by the member of staff to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.
5. If the complaint is against the Head, parents should initially make their complaint informally to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors can be contacted via the Clerk to the Governors, as follows:

Chair of Governors
c/o Clerk to the Governors
Farleigh School
Red Rice
Andover
SP11 7PW

Email: bursar@farleighschool.com
Tel: 01264 712823

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis with the member of staff or Deputy Heads/Head of Pre Prep, 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.
2. In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Head, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
5. 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 the decision. In most cases, the Head will

make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

6. If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee 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 Chair of Governors or their nominee 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 Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.
7. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors (Director of Finance & Operations (DFO)) within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
2. On receipt of a Stage 3 complaint the DFO, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons 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 Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The DFO, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
3. 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 will be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
4. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Head shall also be entitled to 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. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
5. The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
6. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

7. After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
 - a. dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - b. uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - c. make recommendations.
8. 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 by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Timeline for Dealing with Complaints

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within the clear and reasonable timescales specified in this Procedure.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints made in writing under Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the procedure, and any action taken by the school regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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(s) and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

This may include 'special category personal data' as detailed in the School's Privacy Notice.

Parents of Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

The School will provide ISI/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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
