

I.4 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Person(s) responsible:	Headmaster and Chair of Governors
Last updated:	November 2019
Review period:	12 months
Next review:	November 2020

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 in accordance with this 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.

This policy is for parents of all children in the whole school, including EYFS and boarders. Parent(s) means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current 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. 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 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 within Term Time

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints 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 working 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:

Mr K Abel
c/o Clerk to the Governors
Farleigh School
Red Rice
Andover
SP11 7PW

Email: bursar@farleighschool.com
Tel: 01264 712803

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. Written complaints will be recorded by the School and will be acknowledged within 2 working days. 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. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Head 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. Complainants will be notified of the outcome of any investigation within 10 working days of the school receiving a complaint.
6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

7. If the complaint is against the Head and has not been resolved informally at Stage 1 it should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors using the contact details above. If it is not resolved at this stage parents should proceed to Stage 3, a Panel Hearing.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors (Director of Finance & Operations), who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
2. On receipt of a Stage 3 complaint the Clerk to the Governors will refer the matter to the Chair of Governors and a Complaints Panel will be nominated to consider the complaint. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days and arrange a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and in any event within 15 working days. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent (what type of person is independent is described at Appendix A) of the management and running of the school (normally two governors plus another person). Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors.
3. The Panel 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. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
6. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
7. If parents decide not to attend the hearing the panel will nevertheless consider the complaint in absentia, unless the parents have indicated that they are now satisfied or do not wish to proceed further. The panel will issue its findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.
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. 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. The findings will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman and the Head.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all 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 or not. 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(s) 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)

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential so far as is reasonably possible, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are still dissatisfied may raise the issue directly with the ISI or Ofsted if the complaint is concerned with the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements. Contact details are:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London. EC1A 9HA
0207 6000 100 or concerns@isi.net
<http://www.isi.net/complaintsprocedure/>

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD
0300 1234 234
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us/how-complain>

Appendix: Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has supplied the following guidance:

Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”

Former governors or staff of the school could be appointed as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be “independent of the management and running of the school”. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

Schools should bear in mind the need for independence to be real and should use this guidance as appropriate. It is assumed that existing governors will, in the normal course of events, qualify for the other places on the Panel provided they have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint – a prerequisite for any Panel member.

ⁱ A ‘working day’ for the purposes of this Complaints Procedure is a day during the school term when the school is in session. It does not include normal school holidays or exeat weekends.