

Complaints Procedure

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Introduction

Heathcote School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Heathcote School will make the complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day and we will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

Heathcote 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 an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding School year. This information is made available to parents on request from the School Office.

Registered under the formal complaints procedures for the academic year 2024-25 were zero complaints.

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 class/key stage 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 something that it should have done, or acted fairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here to support 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.

Concerns or Complaints relating to Child Protection

Any concern involving a potential child protection issue must be directed immediately to the Head Teacher (Mrs Scott) or the DSL (Miss Pennycook)

Complaints Procedures:

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, it may be necessary for him/her to consult their Key Stage Leader and in turn the Head Teacher.
- Complaints made directly to other members of staff including the Head Teacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher. However, that member of staff may deem it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 15 working days or in the event that the Form teacher/ Key Stage Leader 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 Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher by completing a school Formal Complaint Form. This should be done within 30 days of the issue arising and having exhausted the informal resolution process outside of this timescale the complaint will become not valid. The Head Teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head Teacher will speak to the parents concerned within 5 working days to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, within 10 working days of meeting with

parents, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Teacher will also give reasons for his/her decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Bursar who has been appointed by the Board of Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors who will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 10 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 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.
- 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 it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.
- 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 will (if any) be sent in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person(s) who is/are the subject of the complaint. A copy will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Directors and the Head Teacher.

Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Data Protection

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints and of whether they are resolved at stage 2, stage 3 or proceed to a Panel hearing. The action taken as a result of the complaint and whether or not it was upheld will also be recorded.

Records of low-level concerns and informal complaints which do not have a safeguarding implication will also be kept for management purposes and will be retained for a minimum of 7 years.

Where there is a Safeguarding concern the records will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 and/or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Data protection complaints handling

All complaints regarding data protection handling should be directed to the DPO – Mrs Nadine Solsberg, who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 30 days. and provide a complaints form. Investigation of the complaint will happen without undue delay and the outcomes will be communicated promptly in accordance with statutory obligations under section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018

Early Years Foundation Stage

- The school will investigate any written complaints relating to its fulfillment of the EYFS requirements. Complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within **28 days** of the school having received the complaint.
- Any record of complaints is kept for seven years.
- Parents have the right to make a complaint to ISI or Ofsted should they wish.
- The school will provide ISI or Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Timescales

It is expected that complaints are raised informally at the earliest opportunity (within a week) to enable staff to investigate and get a thorough picture while events are still fresh in people's minds.

Formal complaints should be made within 30 days of the issue arising and having exhausted the informal resolution process; outside of this timescale the complaint will become not valid.

Where a complaint has been deemed to have been resolved by the school (and advised as such to parents), any further complaint will be treated as a new complaint and subject to the same timescales.

Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages the complaint can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

Alleged abuse by a member of staff towards a pupil

If there is a concern or allegation against a member of staff the procedures as outlined in our Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

Contact Details

ISI
Cap House
9-12 Long Lane,
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100

Ofsted
Piccadilly gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
General helpline: 0300 123 4666
Textphone number: 0161 6188524