

LINGFIELD NOTRE DAME SCHOOL – COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a serious complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- We will seek to resolve complaints quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's form teacher. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult colleagues. If the parents consider the complaint to be of a serious nature they should put it in writing – see Stage 2 below.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, a Deputy Head or the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with it personally.
- Should a complaint not be resolved within 7 school working days 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 Principal, expressing their continuing concerns following the informal discussions held in stage 1 of this procedure. The Principal will decide, after further consideration of the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will either meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 school days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations.
- The school will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to a written complaint and shall maintain a Register of Complaints to record inter alia the date of each complaint, summarised details of the complaint and the date and manner of its resolution.
- Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

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 Chairman of the Board of Governors who, amongst other responsibilities, would call a hearing of the Complaints Panel when necessary.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. 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 of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chairman of the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 7 days of the complaint being referred to him/her.
- 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 3 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 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. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations which it shall implement within 7 days of the hearing or as soon as may be practicable thereafter. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where Disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.