

Queenswood



# Complaints Policy

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## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### *Policy statement*

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents of pupils, at Queenswood. It is made available to parents, staff and pupils and will be applied to any complaint registered against the school except in respect of:

1. Child protection allegations where a separate policy and procedure applies.
2. Expulsions where a separate policy and procedure applies.
3. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications where a separate procedure applies.

A parent for the purposes of this policy is a parent who has a daughter currently at the School, to whose experience the complaint relates. It would also include a former parent, where the complaint was registered whilst their daughter was still at the school.

The School expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and it will use its best endeavours to resolve any complaints in this way. If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter, other than the exceptions detailed above, should be submitted in writing to the Principal. Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response. Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.

Complaints are recorded centrally and monitored and it is noted when they are resolved. A written record is kept and serious complaints and their outcomes are regularly reviewed by the Principal or senior member of staff and available for inspection by Governors. It notes whether it was resolved and any action taken before a formal process or following the formal procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails. The number of formal complaints is recorded on the website.

As Queenswood is a boarding school, this policy is drawn up having regard to Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools.

While pupils may, themselves, raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the School will involve parents should this occur. Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

If the complaint is about the Principal, and can't be resolved by discussion with the Principal, or it involves an allegation relating to Child Protection, the complaint should be brought to the attention of the Chair of Governors, Mr Edmund Sautter, c/o The Bursar, Queenswood School, Shepherd's Way, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 6NS.

## *Procedure*

### **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 daughter's appropriate Assistant Head (Head of Lower School, Middle School or Sixth Form), Housemistress, Houseparent or Senior Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Assistant Head, Housemistress, Houseparent or Senior Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult a Deputy Head.
- Occasionally an informal complaint may be in writing to the Principal. If it is made clear that the correspondence does not yet constitute a formal complaint, the Principal will try to resolve the issue on an informal basis.
- Complaints made directly to a Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Section Head, Housemistress, Houseparent or Senior Tutor unless the Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Assistant Head, Housemistress, Houseparent or Senior Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days during which the School is in session (for the purposes of this policy "in session" is defined as term time) or in the event that the Assistant Head, Housemistress, Houseparent or Senior Tutor 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 Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven days during which the School is in session of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- Further investigation may be deemed appropriate, in which case the Principal will delegate this task to a senior member of staff.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 no later than fourteen days during which the School is in session after the initial conversation on receipt of the complaint. The Principal will also give reasons for her 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 should refer their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of the Governors, c/o The Bursar, Queenswood School, Shepherd's Way, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 6NS, who will convene a Complaints Panel under the chairmanship of a nominated Governor.
- 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. Examples of suitable people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or staff at other schools, those with a legal background or members of the Police Force. The Chair of Governors will be asked by the Clerk to the Governors to appoint the Panel members on behalf of the Board. The Panel Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 days during which the School is in session.
- 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 seven days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied by a friend or relation, but not a legal representative acting in that capacity. The Clerk to the Governors must be given seven days notice by the parents of the identity, occupation and relationship with the parents of any proposed attendee.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- The proceedings will not be tape-recorded without the consent of both the Chair of the Panel and parent(s) and any tape-recording will be used only to assist the Panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons and will belong to the School.
- At the discretion and invitation of the Panel, a witness or witnesses may attend to give their evidence at the hearing. Notice of a request for a witness or witnesses to attend the hearing should be given in writing to the Chair of the Panel at least seven days prior to the hearing. The notice should where possible include a written statement by the witness or witnesses relating to the complaint. The decision of the Panel as to whether a witness' or witnesses' evidence is heard or considered is final. Written records will be kept.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 28 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and 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 subject of the complaint.
- If the parents cannot, for good reason, attend the hearing, the Panel will take reasonable steps to schedule an alternative date. The Panel hearing will proceed unless the parent has indicated in writing they are now satisfied, even if the parent chooses not to attend on the scheduled date. The findings of the Panel must be available on the premises for inspection by the Governors and Principal.