



Hurst Lodge School

Yateley Hall

Firgrove Road

Yateley

GU46 6HJ

**Parents' Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
2023/2024**

There were 0 Level 3 complaints registered at the school in the Academic Year 2019/20,
2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23

Complaints Procedure

This policy applies to all children who are on role at the school. It does not apply to prospective students or those who have left the school unless the complaint was lodged during the time when the student was registered at the school. This complaints policy and procedure is available to parents on the school website or as a hard copy directly from the school.

The primary purpose of this policy is that it deals with complaints. A complaint is defined as any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

Introduction:

Hurst Lodge prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint or wish to appeal against a decision, they can expect it to be taken very seriously and treated in accordance with this Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution:

- If parents have a complaint or concern, they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Headteacher as is appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless he/she deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A copy of this will be submitted to the Deputy Headteacher on the day the complaint is received (for monitoring purposes). Should the matter not be resolved within **5 working days**, or in the event that the Tutor/Deputy Headteacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint or appeal in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Although formal complaints will be made in writing this does not mean that a formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution - Preliminary Stage:

- 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 meet the parents/guardian concerned, normally **within 10 working days (Senior School) or 5 working days (EYFS & Junior School)** of receiving the 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.

Reviewed August 2023
Next review August 2024

- The Principal will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, as 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 their decision.
- Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the school will endeavour to complete Stage two within a further **10 working days** (Senior School) and a further **5 working days** (EYFS & Junior School). In the event that the matter is complex and requires more time, a formal resolution must be completed within **15 working days** (Senior School) and **10 working days** (EYFS & Junior School). Parents will be informed if the matter is deemed to be complex and this extension required.

If parents/guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3. In the event that the complaint relates to the exclusion of a child, the Principal may temporarily exclude the child pending the outcome of the complaints procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing:

- A written appeal must be lodged by the parent within **7 working days** of the formal resolution (of Stage 2) being communicated to the parent. Any appeal can only be in relation to the formal resolution communicated (of stage 2); it cannot be an amendment of the facts of the original complaint
- If a parent is not satisfied with a school's response (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) and indicates a wish to continue to Stage 3, the panel hearing will go ahead unless the parent indicates he or she is now satisfied and does not wish to proceed further.
- If necessary, the Appeals Panel will consider the parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by and on behalf of the Proprietor, and 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 – they will be people who have held positions of responsibility used to taking decisions from a balanced position e.g. civil servants; business people; members of the clergy; heads or senior members of staff from other schools; people with a legal background; retired members of public services e.g. police. Panel members will be issued with clear guidance as to the process and a direction to reach final decisions within the specified timescale.

- The Proprietor, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint or appeal and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within **10 working days** of Stage 3 being invoked.
- The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.
- A Stage 3 panel will be a full merits hearing of the complaint.

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- 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 **2 days** prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Parents cannot insist on legal representation at the hearing.
- The school keeps a written record of all complaints or appeals for three years, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Parents/guardians can be assured that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential and subject to the Data Protection Act except where the Secretary of State; the DfE or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint or appeal immediately without the need for further investigation. The Panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about, within 5 working days of the hearing. In addition, a copy of the findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Principal. The record of complaints will detail what actions were taken (regardless of whether or not the complaint was upheld) and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

- If the school has been unsuccessful in resolving a parent's complaint via their complaints procedure and have notified the parent in writing that this is the case, the parent will be advised of the Alternative Dispute Resolution service and whether it is the school's intention to use this process in this particular instance

Additional Information

- **Complaints during the holidays** – where a complaint is received during or near to the commencement of the school holiday period the school may out of necessity need 28 working days to resolve the complaint.
- **Complaints regarding the Principal** – parents/guardians should write, meet or speak to her directly. Should they be dissatisfied with the Principal's response then they should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.
- **Complaints regarding admissions** - parents/guardians should write, meet or speak to the Principal directly. Should they be dissatisfied with the Principal's response then they should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.
- **Complaints regarding exclusions** – parents/guardians should write, meet or speak to the Principal/Deputy directly. Should they be dissatisfied with their response then they should proceed to stage 3 of the Complaints procedure.
- **Complaints about Financial Matters** – should parents/guardians have any concerns, no matter how small, regarding the payment of fees etc the Finance Officer should be contacted in the first instant. Should the matter not be resolved then the matter should be brought to the Bursar and following that, the Proprietor. Complaints will be dealt with at the next scheduled meeting following the receipt of the written complaint regarding fees. The Governors will respond to the complaint within **5 working days** of their decision.
- **Complaints during a Covid outbreak** – should the school/country be dealing with a Covid or pandemic outbreak the school may need to lengthen the lead times as a consequence of disruption or staff absence. The school will advise the complainant that there may be a delay to the time frame stated and negotiate an alternate conclusion date.

On request the school provides OFSTED or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) with a record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

The school will keep a written record of complaints that are made and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints regardless of whether they are upheld.

The school will retain records of complaints for 7 years for those without safeguarding angles. For those concerning allegations of abuse they will be preserved for the term of the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

In the case of a complaint brought about by an EYFS parent, the school undertakes to complete its investigations and reach a solution within 28 working days of the formal meeting at Stage 2 unless the matter is found to be very complex. In that instance, the matter can take up to a further 7 working days. This will be monitored by the Principal.

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

A copy of the teacher's report of the complaint will be received by them when the original complaint is made. If parents are dissatisfied with the procedure at any point of the investigation or feel that intervention at a higher level is appropriate, parents may lodge a complaint with Ofsted regarding EYFS (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us> - enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Telephone: 0300 1234 234) and/or ISI (www.isi.net).

They are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

General Helpline 0300 123 1231
Text/phone 0161 618 8524

Independent Schools Inspectorate
Ground Floor
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA
Phone 020 7600 0100

Current Post Holders

Director/Principal – Miss V Smit

Reviewed: August 2023

This policy must be reviewed no later than: August 2024

Academic Year 18/19

There were 0 Level 3 complaints investigated by the school.

19/20

There were 0 Level 3 complaints investigated by the school.

20/21

There were 0 Level 3 complaints investigated by the school.

21/22

There were 0 Level 3 complaints investigated by the school

22/23

There were 0 Level 3 complaints investigated by the school

Number of Level 2 complaints made in previous year are available on request to the Principal