

Hereford Cathedral School



COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy applies to all parents of pupils currently in the senior section of Hereford Cathedral School. This policy does not apply to parents of past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. There is a similar but separate policy for the Junior School to include those pupils in our EYFS settings.

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that the staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. A copy of this policy is available from the school office on request. The policy is also available on the school website (www.herefordcs.com).

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We would hope to deal with the majority of concerns in an informal way, but proper procedures are in place if a formal complaint is made.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously;
- we take action where appropriate.

The Complaints Process

STAGE 1: MAKING AN INFORMAL COMPLAINT

When parents have concerns they should always contact their child's Tutor in the first instance. The Tutor will, if appropriate, involve other members of staff such as subject teachers, Heads of Department, the Head of House, the Head of Sixth Form, or a member of the Senior Management Team. A written record of concerns is made and logged so that any patterns or particular issues can be noted for future reference. If parents feel that a concern is of a more serious nature, they may contact the Deputy Head to make an informal complaint. The Deputy Head considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. The Deputy Head will make a record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. The Deputy Head will consult with other members of staff as necessary and, following

this consultation, feedback will be provided to the complainant and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the area of concern, along with information regarding any measures that the School intends to take in response. All informal complaints should be handled within a time scale that is reasonable, and within two working (i.e. term time) weeks. However, outside of term time the time scale for response maybe longer and parents will be informed of when they can expect a response: the school will endeavour to respond as quickly as is reasonably possible. In the event that the Deputy Head and the parents 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: MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Should parents not be satisfied with the outcome of this informal process, they should complain formally in writing to the Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School, clearly stating that a formal complaint is being made. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The complaint should be acknowledged within one working week and a response made within two working weeks.

In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. Outside of term time the time scale for response maybe longer and parents will be informed of when they can expect a response: the Headmaster will endeavour to respond as quickly as is reasonably possible.

The Headmaster will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will give written reasons for the decision and explain the right to proceed to Stage 3 and what that entails.

STAGE 3: APPEALS COMMITTEE HEARING

Should a matter not be resolved through both informal and formal procedures, your complaint may be renewed in writing to the Clerk of Governors within five working days of receiving the decision at stage 2 above. Your letter should give full details of your complaint and enclose all relevant documents and your full contact details. Your letter will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within four school days during term time. During holidays an acknowledgement will be provided as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The Clerk of Governors will convene a panel of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters that are subject to complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. A hearing will be held as soon as practicable and within fourteen days, although outside of term time this maybe longer, in which case parents will be informed of when they can expect a response: the school will endeavour to respond as quickly as is reasonably possible. Parents will be entitled to attend, accompanied, if they wish, by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The findings, and recommendations, if any, will be made available in writing to the parents and available for inspection on the school premises by the governors and head, and where relevant the person complained about within 28 days. The decision of the panel will be final.

1. RECORD KEEPING

Written records will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are 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.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head and/or Deputy Head/Head of Pre-Prep as appropriate and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties, outside the School, aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it becomes necessary to refer matters to the police. Parents/guardians/carers would be fully informed in such circumstances.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, anonymous complaints may not be pursued. Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of a complaint will be handled confidentially within the School.

Parents may request information on the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. There were three complaints registered under our formal procedure during the academic year 2014/15.

Reviewed by PAS

November 2016