



COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action'. Thomas's has long prided itself on its openness and 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 policy.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- Our hope is that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's form teacher, specialist teacher, or year group leader, whichever is most appropriate. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher or Specialist teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or specialist teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The form teacher or specialist teacher 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 five days or in the event that the form teacher or specialist teacher 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. The Head will decide the appropriate course of action within three working days of receipt of the complaint.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned within five 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 Head to carry out further investigations. This may be decided at the first meeting with the parents. If however, the Head decides to carry out investigations before meeting the parents, they will be informed of this within three working days of the Head

receiving the complaint and the meeting with parents will take place within seven working days.

- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. This will be within ten working days of receipt of the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are 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 Vice Principal, who has been appointed by the Principals to call hearings of the Complaints Panel and to act in the role of Investigating Officer as appropriate.
- The Vice Principal will then refer the matter 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, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the specific school but not necessarily of the Thomas's group of schools. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Principals. The Vice Principal, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten 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 two 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 complete within ten days of the Hearing. 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 by electronic mail or otherwise, to the parents, the Head, the Principals and, where relevant, the person complained of.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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 33 (k) of the Education [Independent Schools Standards England] Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

At all formal stages of the complaints procedure, the following information should be recorded:

- The name of the complainant
- The date and time at which the complaint was made
- The details of the complaint
- The desired outcome of the complainant
- How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held)
- Results and conclusions of investigations
- Any action taken
- The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit on complaint)

This policy is made available to parents on our website www.thomas-s.co.uk, the Parent Portal and in the Parents' Handbook. It is also available on request.

Parents are welcome to contact their school to request the number of complaints that there have been during the last 12 months.

REFERENCES

This Policy has been informed by:

DfE advice 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures' (January 2016)

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (2014)

See also: **Behaviour Policy, Code of Conduct, Terms & Conditions**

This policy will be reviewed every two years			
Reviewed: December 2008	By:	Jill Kelham Vice Principal	Changes made
Latest Review: January 2017	By:	Tobyn Thomas, Principal, Joanna Copland, Vice Principal	Minor changes made
Next Review: January 2019	By:	Tobyn Thomas, Principal, Joanna Copland, Vice Principal	