

Complaints Policy



SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure Policy

Part Seven of ISI Integrated Handbook, Regulatory Requirements – Complaints

The School has, and follows, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards.

This procedure addresses ISI Regulatory Requirement (effective February 2016, updated February 2020), Part 6 Provision of Information Para 32 sub para 3 (f) and Part 7 Manner in which complaints are to be held is Para 33.

Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If, however, pupils or parents do have a complaint, the procedure is as follows.

Pupil Complaints Procedure

For pupils, this is clearly explained in the Guidelines for Life at Sutton Valence School, a copy of which is available in the portal and in the Pupil Information Team. It states:

‘If, for any reason, you have a complaint, the first thing you should do is contact a member of staff you trust, probably your tutor. You can, if you need support, take a friend with you. If the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you can submit a full complaint in writing to the Senior Deputy Head who will investigate the matter promptly and thoroughly.’

It is an obligation to follow up pupil complaints and to investigate specific allegations where they have been made. It is a necessity to keep a written record of questions asked and procedures followed when looking into a complaint. Any formal complaint relating to the running of the School should be addressed to the Headmaster, either in writing or personally. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

It should be remembered that all complaints should be recorded on the pupil’s file.

Parental Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. With this in mind, all complaints and concerns will normally be acknowledged within 48 hours
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child’s tutor, housemaster or housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the tutor, housemaster or housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a Head of Department, the Head of Juniors, the Head of Sixth Form, the Senior Deputy Head or Headmaster;
- Complaints made directly to Head of Department, the Head of Juniors, the Head of Sixth Form, the Senior Deputy Head or Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant tutor, housemaster or housemistress, unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally;

- Should the matter not be resolved immediately, receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within five days and a response provided within ten working school days
- The tutor, housemaster or housemistress 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 the agreed timeframe or in the event that the tutor, housemaster or housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint, within the next ten working school days, in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- Any parent who is still not satisfied and wishes to make a formal complaint should make it known to the Headmaster by telephone, email, fax, letter or personal visit by appointment. The Headmaster will acknowledge the complaint within 48 hours, consider the complaint and investigate it as appropriate. He will normally respond to the parent within 21 working days;
- If the parent is not satisfied with the response as above, they should notify the School within ten working school days and the parent may appeal. The School will make provision for a hearing before a panel of three persons who have not been involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, and in compliance with the Education (Independent School Standard) Regulations 2016. One person on the panel will be independent of the management and running of the School.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

The Clerk to the Governing Body will be responsible for the appointment of the panel and the time scales for the management of the complaint will be as follows:

- The Headmaster of the School will reply to the parent after an appeal has been lodged within five working days to acknowledge the appeal;
- The parents will be given seven working days' notice of the date of the hearing;
- The process should be complete within 21 working days from acknowledging the complaint.

Parents, and the person being complained about, may attend the hearing and may be accompanied. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's 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 parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parent, the Headmaster, the governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.

In the event of the Headmaster deciding to exclude a pupil permanently from the School, parents have 14 days from receipt of this decision to appeal, in writing, The protocols for such an appeal will follow the process as set out in Stage 3 of the complaints procedures.

Boarders and Welfare

Boarders and their parents who have a complaint about their welfare, which they feel has not been answered by the School's normal procedures, can inform an inspector when they visit the School or contact the ISI on 0207 6000100. You may also contact the Children's Rights Director about your concerns, via their website - www.rights4me.org. Boarders and parents can contact the National Care Standards Commission regarding any complaint concerning a boarder's welfare.

Referral can be made to the Designated Officer (LADO) Service - for managing allegations against staff - LADO on duty 03000 410888 or email kentchildrenslado@kent.gov.uk.

The Principal Officer (Safeguarding) is Claire Ray (03000 415788).

The Independent Listener is Mrs Mary T Hall, who is contactable on 01622 842118 or by email at halltheresemary@gmail.com.

Confidentiality and Complaints record

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record is kept of formal complaints, their outcomes, and whether they were resolved at Stage 2, or proceeded to a panel hearing. Notes are also kept of any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). In addition, a record of complaints that are resolved informally is regularly reviewed by the Headmaster or a senior member of staff. The complaints record is also a standing item at the first Senior Management Team meeting at the start of each term.

Records of complaints are maintained for three years after the pupil has left the School and are kept confidential. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Records of informal complaints are recorded at a house level.

From July 2021 until July 2022, the School has received two formal complaints.

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