

THE VILLAGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND HANDLING GUIDE

THIS POLICY IS REVIEWED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS

Policy reviewed by: Graeme Delaney

Policy approved by: Robert Berry – Director of Operations

Review date: 09/07/2020

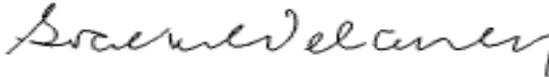
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Reviewer's Signature:



Approver's Signature:



Please note: 'School' refers to Chatsworth Schools and The Village Prep School; 'parents' refers to parents, guardians and carers.

This is a whole school policy, which also applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Introduction

This document provides a “Quick Guide” to handling complaints from Parents and the Public. The full complaints procedure is contained later in the Staff Handbook and in the Policies File.

Dealing with Complaints

Although complaints are rare it is essential that we deal with them in a timely and efficient manner. For the person that has made a complaint, a lack of response or lack of information will only increase their frustration, so the policy must be adhered to at all times.

All complaints should be recorded and allocated a reference number and will be initially managed by the Head. We should acknowledge the complaint with a response to the complainant informing them of the process that will be followed and an estimated timescale for resolution. All complaints must initiate and continue with a “paper trail”, all parties must be copied into letters, i.e. complainant, Head and records kept. It is essential that all complaints are dealt with FULLY. Students / fee payers must only be encouraged to contact Head Office when all other avenues have been exhausted – and escalation of this nature MUST be done in writing.

Where complaints are received via a third party and subject to an initial delay, we will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that these are handled within the target resolution and response times from the original point of contact.

For the purpose of clarity, the following definitions apply to complaints response, update and resolution.

- Complaint Response – complaint details are captured together with the parent/ complainant’s name, address and preferred future contact method. The complaints procedure should be explained, and the complainant advised that the complaint is being investigated and that they will hear from us within three working days
- Complaint Update – The complainant is advised of the progress of their complaint; further information is sought relating to the complaint where necessary
- Complaints Resolution – The complainant is advised of the outcome of their complaint, the complainant is asked as to whether they are satisfied with the outcome, and if so the complaint is closed. Where they are not satisfied the escalation procedure is explained
- Escalation Policy - Complaints which we believe have been resolved and where the Complainant remains unsatisfied will be subject to an escalation process and the Complainant should report their complaint in writing to the Director of Operations of Chatsworth Schools

Complaints Policy for Schools

All schools should aim to work collaboratively in partnership with parents. However, it is recognised that there are times when there will be issues that are not resolved to the satisfaction of parents and that they will wish to make a complaint. If parents or pupils do have a complaint, the school will treat it in accordance with the policy and procedures detailed below. Responding to complaints will be given the highest priority by the school and will be dealt with comprehensively.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

We hope that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head Teacher.

Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The Form 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 immediately, receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 days and a response provided within 5 working days. If a response cannot be provided within that time, or in the event that the form 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, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned, normally within two 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, in which case a definitive answer will be given within 10 further 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 of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/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 will be referred to the Director of Operations of Chatsworth Schools, who will call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of the Director of Operations of Chatsworth Schools, or her nominated representative, who will be a Director of Chatsworth Schools, the Head of the school and an independent panel member not involved in the management or running of the school, who may be a Head of another school within Chatsworth Schools.

If the Head of the school has already been involved in the handling of the complaint at Stages 1 or 2, an appropriate alternative person will be appointed to the Panel for the purposes of hearing that complaint.

The Director of Operations, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 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 three 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 proceed.

After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.

The Panel's findings and recommendation will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head and, where relevant, the person regarding whom the complaint was made.

Recording of Complaints

All complaints, and the outcome of the individual complaint, are duly recorded in the Complaints Register. The stage at which the complaint is concluded, whether at the preliminary stage or the final stage of a Panel Hearing, is appropriately noted.

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 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulation 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's Inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Interpretation

In this policy, the term "senior manager" means a School Head and their designated deputies.

This policy applies to all employees in all Schools (save for Schools with their own procedure which shall prevail) and other work environments within Chatsworth Schools

This policy applies within all companies, which are wholly owned subsidiaries of Chatsworth Schools Ltd, a company registered in England, registered number 11552579.

The registered office of all companies is Crimea Office, The Great Tew Estate, Great Tew, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 4AH. Any enquiries regarding the application of this policy should be addressed to the Director of Operations at the above address.

