



COMPLAINTS POLICY: DEALING WITH PARENTAL CONCERNS Whole School

Introduction

The school welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and aims to deal properly with any concerns that parents may raise. If, as parents, you have concerns, we would much rather hear them as soon as possible. If in doubt, you should contact the school, as we are here to help. We aim to respond within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way in accordance with this Policy.

The school will keep a written record of any complaints and their outcome. The school will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation with 28 days of having received the complaint.

It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. It is normally best to start with the member of staff most closely connected with the issue. A list of staff with contact details is given at the end of this Policy.

References to written communication include e-mail but does not include any other form of electronic communication (social media, text messages, etc).

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's form tutor (Senior School), class teacher (Prep School) or housemistress (boarders). For more serious concerns, parents may choose to contact a senior member of staff (i.e, the relevant Head of Department, Assistant Head, Deputy Head or Head).
- If the form tutor, class teacher or housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to refer the matter to a senior member of staff.
- Complaints made directly to a senior member of staff may be delegated to the relevant form tutor, class teacher or housemistress, unless it is deemed appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' and school's satisfaction.

- The person dealing with the complaint must keep a written record of all complaints and the date(s) on which they were received. He/she must also inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the nature and outcome of the complaint.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 28 days of the initial complaint or in the event that the school and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may request a formal resolution (Stage 2).

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, then they should write to the Chair of Governors and the Headmistress, and request that the matter be considered further.
- Wherever possible, the Headmistress will speak to the parents concerned, within 7 days (or 28 days if during the school holidays) of receiving the complaint, and attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the school and the parents. The Head will keep a written record of this meeting.
- If it is not possible to resolve the matter during this meeting or if the matter is considered significantly serious or complex then the Headmistress, in liaison with the Chair of Governors, will instigate a formal investigation into the complaint. The investigation will normally be conducted by a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has not previously been involved in the matter.
- The investigation should be conducted in a timely manner but with a thoroughness appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint. The person conducting the complaint should keep written records of all meetings and interviews and report his/her findings to the Headmistress. Except in extenuating circumstances, the investigation must be completed within 28 days of its instigation.
- The Headmistress, in liaison with the Chair of Governors, will review the findings of the investigation and decide upon the outcome of the complaint. This decision will be communicated to the parents in writing.
- The school will keep a written record of the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not).
- If the parents are not satisfied with the Headmistress's decision, then they may request a Panel Hearing (Stage 3).

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- Parents may request a Panel Hearing by writing to the Chair of Governors within 28 days of receipt of the Headmistress's decision.
- The Chair of Governors will inform the parents in writing of the date on which the matter has been formally referred to the Complaints Panel and of the procedure in respect of a panel hearing. The Chair of Governors will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 28 days of the referral.
- The Panel 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors on behalf of the Board of Governors.
- 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 no later than 5 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents are invited to attend the Panel Hearing and maybe 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 try to resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the hearing will be adjourned to allow this to be done. The Panel will decide what steps should be taken and will determine a new date for the adjourned hearing.
- At the hearing, after due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel Chairman will write to the parents within 7 days of the conclusion of the hearing, informing them of the decision of the Panel and such recommendations (if any) made by them. The letter will set out the reasons for the decision. A copy of the letter sent to the parents will be sent to the Head, to the Governors and, where relevant, to any person who is the subject of the complaint.
- The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The school will keep a written record of the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not).
- All panel findings will be reported to a Governors' meeting.

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 25(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection.

Boarders

Pupils in the boarding community have a separate means of registering a complaint which they may use in addition to or instead of the complaint process described in this policy. Girls wishing to make a complaint may use the Boarding House Complaints Procedure. This is available from House Staff or in confidence from the boarders' handbook, a copy of which is kept in the house common room.

A separate record of complaints is kept from Boarders' parents is kept centrally.

Record Keeping

- All informal complaints must be referred to the Senior Leadership Team at the time of resolution. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring the frequency and nature of informal complaints and taking appropriate action should underlying patterns emerge.
- All complaints dealt with under the formal procedure set out at Stage 2, will be recorded by the Headmistress in a Central Confidential Register of Complaints maintained by the Headmistress. The register will include relevant details of the complaint including the date when the complaint was made, the date and the manner in which it was resolved, whether it proceeded to a panel hearing, the investigation/panel findings and recommendations, and the action taken by the school.
- The confidential register will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmistress and Chair of Governors and will be inspected periodically by the Chair of Governors.

At the Senior School:

Most issues are best aired first with your daughter's form tutor or Assistant Head. You may contact them through the main school office (Tel. 01892 822006) or via their e-mail:

Assistant Head (Lower School) hallam@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk	Mrs L Hallam
Senior Tutors for Years 7, 8 & 9 fullers@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk ; lewis@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk	Miss S Fuller and Mrs L Lewis
Assistant Head (Middle School) tobinj@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk	Mrs J Tobin
Senior Tutor for Years 10 & 11 youngminw@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk	Mrs W Young-Min

Head of Sixth Form
mossmanj@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Senior Tutor for Sixth Form
whartona@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Mr J Mossman
Mrs A Wharton

Or, for boarders, your daughter's housemistress:

Housemistress of Hawkwell & Hargreaves
kruschandls@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Housemistress of James & Osborn
thorpej@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Mrs S Kruschandl
Miss G Thorpe

Alternatively you may wish to talk to one of the following:

- **Deputy Head**
kirka@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
(who could put you in touch with Heads of Department when appropriate)
Mr A Kirk-Burgess
- **for medical matters:**
Nursing Sister
devinej@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Sister Janette Devine
- **for financial matters:**
Bursar
bursary@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Mrs A Jenkins

You can, of course, go directly to the Headmistress especially if the matter is sensitive. You should also speak to the Headmistress if you are not satisfied that your concerns have been fully or fairly considered after speaking to another member of staff.
headmistress@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk Ms J Lodrick

If you wish to contact the Chair of Governors directly this can be done by writing to Edmund Waterhouse c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the school address, or alternatively by email waterhousee@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk.

At the Preparatory School:

We value our relationships with you as parents and it is important that we work together in your daughter's best interests. I hope that the details listed below will assist you in directing your concern to the appropriate member of staff.

Most concerns are best discussed first with your daughter's class teacher.

If you have any queries about the Foundation Stage curriculum then please contact:

Early Years Coordinator Mrs P Dabin dabinp@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you have a query about reporting and assessment, teaching and learning and any pastoral concern that cannot be resolved by discussion with your daughter's class teacher then please direct your concerns to the following members of staff:

Assistant Head, Pastoral Mrs T Youdale youdalet@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Assistant Heads, Teaching & Learning
Mrs S Hall halls@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Miss V Armstrong armstrongv@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you feel it is not appropriate to discuss your concern with any of the above staff then you should contact Mr Nik Pears, Head of the Preparatory School, telephone 01892 820204 or email pearsn@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you wish to contact the Chair of Governors directly this can be done by writing to Edmund Waterhouse c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the school address, or alternatively by email waterhousee@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of how your complaint has been dealt with, you can refer the matter to:

ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate), Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Telephone: 020 7600 0100
www.isi.net

For matters relating to for Early Years Foundation Stage:
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231.

Reviewed Nov 2008 in line with Farrer & Co's guidance
Amended and agreed by SLT: May 2015
Approved by Governors: November 2015
Contacts amended: August 2016
Reviewed annually

In the school year 2015 - 2016 there were three formal complaints to Governors (Prep and Senior School).