



DITCHAM PARK SCHOOL

Where every child is known and valued

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Compiled by	Headmaster
Approved by	SLT
Governor Approval	Pending (D Taylor)
Date of Publication	November 2018
Next Review	November 2019



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Ditcham Park School is proud of the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

This policy applies to all parents of pupils currently attending Ditcham Park School and is made available on the School website or on request from the School Office. The complaints policy only applies to the parents of current pupils at the school, or past parents of pupils who were registered at the school at the time that the initial complaint was registered. This policy does not include exclusions.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Ditcham Park School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

Parents' three-stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. In the event of a parent having a complaint the normal procedure should be to contact their son/daughter's Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Subject Teacher in the first instance. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by this means to the parent's satisfaction.
 - If the Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department or a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team.
 - Complaints made directly to a Head of Department will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Subject Teacher in the first instance unless the Head of Department deems it appropriate for the matter to be referred to the Senior Leadership Team directly.



Complaints Policy and Procedure

2. If a parent considers their complaint is not satisfactorily resolved then the parent should contact the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team as follows:
 - The Head of Seniors for pastoral matters, relating to Seniors;
 - The Deputy Head of Seniors for academic matters, relating to Seniors;
 - The Head of Juniors for all concerns relating to Juniors;
 - The Bursar for all financial matters.

These senior members of staff will investigate complaints and discuss the matter with the Headmaster. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue quickly and staff will normally respond within forty eight hours of any communication, although serious issues may take longer. Normally a full response should be received or a meeting should be arranged within 5 working days.

3. Class Teachers and Form Tutors who receive complaints should ensure that a note is placed on the pupil's file.
4. A formal written record of all concerns and complaints which reach the Senior Leadership Team and the date on which they were received will be made.

If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure (Formal Resolution).

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put the complaint in writing addressed to the Headmaster. The parent should use the key word '**complaint**' in all correspondence and within the subject heading when using e-mail.

It should be noted that if the complaint concerns the Headmaster, parents should put the complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors, at the School's postal address.

1. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet with or speak to the parent concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the e-mail or letter of complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
2. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
3. 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 the parent will be informed of this decision in writing, within 10 working days of the Headmaster receiving the complaint. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.



Complaints Policy and Procedure

4. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with a decision made at this stage, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy (Panel Hearing).

If the complaint is made during a School holiday period or as the School enters a School holiday period parents should note that the timescales set out above may be delayed if access to key staff is required.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's written decision they will need to write to the Headmaster informing him that this is the case within 20 working days. Parents will then be referred to the Chair of the Governing Body, who has been appointed by the Governors to convene a Complaints Panel hearing when required.

The Chair of Governors can be contacted either via the Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Denise Allen, at the School by e-mail denise.allen@ditchampark.com or telephone 01730 825659 Ext 1250; or directly by e-mail chairofgovernors@ditchampark.com, or by post marking correspondence "Private and Confidential for the Attention of the Chair of Governors" and posted to the School address.

1. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two School Governors who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and a panel member who is independent from the management and running of the school (see Appendix). The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 working days of the complaint being escalated to him/her by the Clerk to the Governors.
2. The Complaints Panel hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel will consider the parents' complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.
3. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
4. 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.



Complaints Policy and Procedure

5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
6. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing.
7. 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. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

If the complaint is made during a School holiday period or as the School enters a School holiday period parents should note that the timescales set out above may be delayed if access to key staff is required.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. If the complaint is made during a School holiday period, or as the School enters a School holiday period, parents should note that the timescales set out above may be delayed if access to key staff is required.

Action taken by the School as a result of Complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld)

1. In the event that a formal complaint involves or relates to a member of staff, then the member of staff will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedures being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.
2. In the event of a Complaints Panel hearing, the member of staff will have the right to make representation to the panel.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a Complaints Panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether



Complaints Policy and Procedure

the complaint is upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised;
- Name of parent;
- Name of pupil;
- Description of the issue;
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate);
- Witness statements (if appropriate);
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations).
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- This policy document is available on request (and via the School website) to parents of current and prospective pupils and on the school premises.
- Any written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.
- Ditcham Park School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.
- Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements. The necessary contact details are:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone (General Enquiries 0300 1231231)
(About Schools 0300 1234 234) or
(About Concerns 0300 123 4666) or

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate,

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Telephone (About Concerns 020 7600 0100) or

Email: (General Enquiries info@isi.net) or
(About Concerns concerns@isi.net)



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Ditcham Park School – Juniors: received no Stage 2 formal complaints and no Stage 3 formal complaints during the academic year 2017-2018.

Ditcham Park School – Seniors: received 1 Stage 2 formal complaints and no Stage 3 formal complaints during the academic year 2017-2018.

Pupil Guidelines

1. Worries and Complaints

If pupils feel worried about something and wish to complain about their treatment, there are two things to remember: -

- a. They can talk to someone about their problem;
- b. They can make a formal complaint to someone.

Pupils will not get into trouble for making a complaint in good faith.

There are a number of people to whom a pupil can talk to or from whom they can ask advice: a close friend who may be able to help a fellow pupil, or an older student such as a Mentor or member of the Pupil Leadership Team, if a pupil does not wish to go straight to a member of the academic staff.

Problems with academic work, medical issues or pastoral issues are normally discussed with Class Teachers, Form Tutors or Subject Teachers.

Pupils who wish to record a concern or a complaint can also use the 'suggestion box' situated in the Library.

2. How to Make a Complaint

- a. The first thing a pupil should do is to speak to any member of staff he/she trusts.
- b. If a pupil has tried one of these approaches and is not satisfied that the problem has been dealt with satisfactorily, he/she may speak to either of the following adults who have agreed to act independently on behalf of pupils as 'student advisors':

Within the School:

Head of Seniors (Mark Philips)

Head of Juniors (Helen Parrott)

Independent (off School site):

Mrs Mary Downes (Governor)

Fernsden,

Kingsfernden Lane,

Sheet,

Petersfield GU32 2AU

Telephone: 01730 265293



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Mobile : 07599 189394
Email: downes.sheet@btinternet.com

Pupils may contact either one of these advisors at any time and make an appointment to see them. Pupils may take a friend with them and arrange to meet in School.

3. Useful Website and Telephone Number

Child Line
www.childline.org.uk -0800 1111 (CALL FREE)

APPENDIX

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The Department for Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member.

“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”

Compiled by: Headmaster	Date: November 2018
Approved by: SLT	Review Date: November 2019