



# HEDINGHAM SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM

ACHIEVEMENT & EXCELLENCE

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Approved by:** Full Governors **Date:** 21 March 2018

**Last reviewed on:** 21 March 2018

**Next review due by:** March 2021

## **Hedingham School and Sixth Form COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Introduction**

1. The Policy of Hedingham School and Sixth Form School is to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly to the satisfaction of all concerned. On this basis first contact will be treated as a concern rather than a complaint with the aim of resolving any problem informally whenever possible.

2. This Policy applies to any parent who wishes to raise genuine concerns about aspects of Hedingham School and Sixth Form School life for which there are not already set provisions. Reference to parents in this Policy includes carers and all adult members of the community with parental responsibility for a student attending the school. This Policy does not deal with disputes between parents. Parents are reminded that there are separate provisions for the following issues:

- (a) Admissions
- (b) Exclusions
- (c) Safeguarding (including Child Protection)
- (d) Whistleblowing (financial improprieties and other serious issues)
- (e) Personal conduct or capability of a member of staff

3. Parents should note that these other procedures are often confidential and they may receive limited information as to the outcome of the issue raised by them.

4. This Policy of Hedingham School and Sixth Form School is to establish a fair framework with procedures to allow for genuine concerns to be satisfactorily resolved and action taken. Parents may in particular use this complaints procedure if they believe that the school is failing to provide or is acting unreasonably with regard to the following:

- (a) The statutory requirements as to curriculum in the school or for a particular student
- (b) Charging for school activities
- (c) Offering only approved qualifications or syllabuses
- (d) Religious education
- (e) Information as required by law
- (f) The policies and procedures of the school other than those covered in clause 2 above
- (g) Any other statutory duty

5. Hedingham School and Sixth Form School welcomes constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

6. Staff and Governors will be trained in handling parental concerns and complaints.

### **General Matters**

7. Concerns or complaints will be treated with discretion and in confidence wherever possible but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

8. Hedingham School and Sixth Form School aims to deal with all concerns or complaints impartially, swiftly, positively and fairly.

9. Parents should state at any stage what action they consider might resolve the problem. Hedingham School and Sixth Form School wishes to avoid misunderstandings and deal with issues in a positive atmosphere. Parents should be respectful of all members of the school community. They should express any complaint fully and co-operate with Hedingham School and Sixth Form School in resolving issues.

10. Any concerns or complaints will be fully and fairly investigated where appropriate. The person carrying out the investigation will:

- (a) Make preliminary contact with the parents and all others involved within five teaching days of the start of the investigation and keep them advised as to progress
- (b) Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- (c) Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- (d) Identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstanding
- (e) Interview all those involved with the matter.
- (f) Keep records and take statements if necessary
- (g) Analyse information and make an open-minded independent assessment
- (h) Keep all parties informed of outcome and the action being taken where appropriate

11. No member of staff will give a personal apology or an admission of liability without the consent of the Headteacher. This does not prevent regret being expressed or an acknowledgement that the parent may have some justification in relation to their concern or complaint. This is important where the situation could have been handled better or differently and such regret or acknowledgement will provide a successful conclusion.

12. Hedingham School and Sixth Form School wishes to provide an effective response and appropriate redress if necessary. If the complaints procedure shows the school is at fault the school will:

- (a) Acknowledge the concern or complaint is valid or could have been handled differently or better
- (b) Offer an apology, an explanation or an undertaking to endeavour to avoid a recurrence whichever will be appropriate
- (c) Review school policies or procedures if this is required
- (d) Improve the school's services or systems in particular explaining the steps that will be taken to ensure that a problem does not happen again

13. Complaints should be made within three months of an incident occurring but this period may be extended by the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman of Governors in exceptional circumstances may modify the requirement for a written request to be made at any stage.

14. A record of complaints that require review will be kept by the Headteacher and reported on to the Governors annually and discussed with the Staff Leadership Team.

15. At any meeting a person involved with the procedures of this policy is always allowed to bring "a friend" whether as a representative or to provide moral support.

16. Any concern about the Headteacher or a Governor or the Governing Body will be dealt with by the Chairman of Governors.

17. Any formal complaint involving a Governor or the Governing Body will be referred directly to the Complaints Panel. If the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman of the Complaints Panel are directly involved with the formal complaint the Chairman of Governors may appoint another Governor to act in that instance as Chairman of the Complaints Panel.

18. The Chairman of Governors may appoint an independent person as Chairman of the Complaints Panel if there is a formal complaint involving the whole Governing Body and this is appropriate. This may result in a totally independent panel being appointed.

19. As appropriate the Chairman of Governors or Chairman of the Complaints Panel is entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint after all three stages of the complaints process have been completed. Sometimes it is a case of "agreeing

to disagree". He or she can also prevent a parent being unreasonable in particular trying to reopen an issue already decided or making serial or persistent complaints on the same or similar issues. He or she may also consider unacceptable conduct on the part of a parent such as using threats or inappropriate use of media. On his or her ruling Hedingham School and Sixth Form School will then consider the matter closed.

20. A parent may complain in writing to the Department for Education, Schools Complaints Unit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD if:

- the school has not complied with this policy and its procedures
- the school has failed to comply with its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
- the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation unless another organisation is better placed to consider the matter.

There is a helpline 03700 002288 or you may go online at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

21. Third parties using the facilities of the school should have their own complaints procedure. Hedingham School and Sixth Form has a separate complaints policy for complaints or concerns from people other than parents.

### **The Procedures**

#### **22. Stage 1 - The First Contact involves consideration of an issue as a concern rather than as a formal complaint**

23. The School will provide guidance for parents where a parent wishes to raise a concern. The School will explain its policies, procedures and practices to parents.

24. The parent should always discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff and if that member of staff cannot deal with matters immediately that member of staff will take details and if necessary refer the concern to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent.

25. The member of staff dealing with the matter will make sure that the parent is clear as to what if any action or monitoring of the situation has been agreed and if appropriate they will confirm this in writing.

26. A member of staff may refer matters to their line manager who may involve a senior member of staff. The member of staff will in any event be advised as to the outcome of the issue.

27. If the Headteacher is involved the concern will be referred to the Chairman of Governors. If at this point the Headteacher has not been involved the parent may request that he considers the matter as a concern. This will not prevent the Headteacher being the reviewer under Stage 2.

28. Where no satisfactory solution can be found the parent can request a review within 10 teaching days of first contact or any agreed extended period.

#### **29. Stage 2 – Review - This is the first formal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

30. The parent must make a written request for review. The reviewer will be the Headteacher or if the Headteacher is directly involved with the complaint the reviewer will be a Governor appointed by the Chairman of Governors. If there is any doubt as to who the reviewer should be this will be determined by the Chairman of Governors.

31. The reviewer will carry out an investigation or if one has been undertaken they will conduct a further investigation of the issue.

32. All representations to the reviewer may be by way of discussion or in writing or by e-mail.

33. The reviewer will give a written statement of the decision to all people concerned and the reasons for it and any action to be taken with confirmation that the parent is entitled to refer matters to the Complaints Panel if they are not satisfied.

34. The parent is entitled to refer matters to the Complaints Panel if the reviewer has not made a decision within 20 teaching days of the request for review or any agreed extended period.

**35. Stage 3 - The Complaints Panel. This is the second formal stage of the Complaints Procedure.**

36. If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the reviewer they may within 20 teaching days of receiving the decision letter (or if no decision is made as referred to in Stage 2 clause 34) notify the Clerk to the Governors in writing of a wish to have matters referred to the Complaints Panel.

37. The Complaints Panel consists of a panel of three members. These will be Governors not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint and an appropriate independent person or persons who are not a Governor of this school or involved in the management or running of this school. It will convene and meet within 20 teaching days of the written request being received. Reasonable notice will be given to all relevant persons of the date and time of the Panel meeting.

38. The purpose of the Complaints Panel is to provide an open minded and impartial independent review of the complaint. The Chairman of the Panel will give written directions and confirm the procedures in relation to the Panel meeting. If all parties and the Chairman of the Panel agree the complaint may be decided by written representations without the need for anyone to attend the meeting other than the members of the Panel.

39. The Panel will within 15 teaching days of its meeting give a written statement to all people concerned of its decision and the reasons for it. It may also make recommendations. Hedingham School and Sixth Form School will then consider the matter closed.

40. This policy will be well publicised. It will be reviewed at least every three years.