



# Leighton Park School

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Introduction

This policy is available on our website but a copy of it can be supplied by the school on request. It can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Leighton Park School has always aimed for a high quality of teaching and pastoral care, and enjoys close relationships with parents. Should a concern or complaint arise, it is expected that parents will contact the School as a matter of urgency so that the issue can be discussed. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- i) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- ii) If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's/daughter's Tutor or Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- iii) A written complaint will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays.
- iv) If the Tutor or Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department; the Head of Fryer, Middle School or Sixth Form; the Housemaster/Housemistress; the Deputy Head or the Head.
- v) Complaints made directly to staff in iii) above will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor or Teacher unless he/she deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- vi) Parents and boarders can contact the regulatory authority Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer (**LADO**) regarding any complaint concerning the welfare of a boarder. Details of how to contact Ofsted are at the end of this policy. The designated member of staff for child protection at the school (Nigel Williams) will be able to provide the name and contact details for the LADO with responsibility for the school. Alternatively you should be able to find these details on the Reading Local Safeguarding Children Board (**LSCB**) website.

- vii) The Tutor or 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 within 10 working days, or in the event that the Tutor or Teacher and 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**

- i) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and their full contact details in an envelope addressed to the Head. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within two working days during term time indicating the appropriate course of action and the likely timescale.
- ii) The Head is likely to request a meeting with the parents concerned, within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- iii) It may be necessary for the Head, or another senior member of staff acting as the investigator, to carry out further investigations. Additional information may be requested from the parent and others who have knowledge of the circumstances.
- iv) The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- v) 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 the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- vi) The Head's aim would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 28 working days from the receipt of the complaint. It should be noted that any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.
- vii) If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- i) If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, who will arrange for a hearing of the Complaints Panel to be called. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.
- ii) The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
  - a. the documents provided by both parties and
  - b. any representations made by the parents or the Head.

If after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head or to the full body of Governors as appropriate.

- iii) To request a hearing before the Panel, parents should write to the Clerk to the Governors within five working days of the decision complained of. The request will usually only be considered if Stages 1 and 2 of the procedure have been completed. A copy of all relevant documents and the parents full contact details should accompany the letter to the Clerk. The parents should also state in the letter the outcome that they desire and all the grounds of the complaint. The Clerk will acknowledge the request in writing within two working days. If the parents require assistance with the request, for example, because of a disability, they should contact the Clerk who will make appropriate arrangements.
- iv) The Panel will consist of at least three members not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including two Governors and an additional member who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days. The Panel will not, however, normally sit during half terms or holidays. At least five working days before the hearing, the Clerk will send to the parents written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present.
- v) 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 five days prior to the hearing.
- vi) 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 the parents wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they must notify the School at least seven working days before the hearing. The school management and teachers will also be present.
- vii) Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. The hearing may be adjourned for further investigation of any relevant issue.
- viii) After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently. The Panel will write to the parents, by e-mail where appropriate, within seven working days confirming its decision and the reasons for it and any recommendations. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint was made. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.

- ix) A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required of the School by part 7 paragraph 25 (k) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection under Section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, or where any other legal obligation prevails. This policy has been drawn up having regard to Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (Revised September 2010).

If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, complaints can also be directed to Ofsted on 08456 404040 or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) through Wokingham Borough Council on 0118 974 6000.

# **INFORMATION FOR PUPILS**

## **Any Problems, Complaints or Suggestions?**

If so, the school would like to hear.

### **How do I make a complaint?**

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier.
- You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

### **To whom?**

- To anyone on the staff.

### **Does it matter what the issue is?**

- No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas to resolve the issue.

### **What will happen next?**

- If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

### **Do others have to know?**

- If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff – they will understand, and explain their response and any action which they may need to take.
- Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry – it will only be discussed by staff who can help you.
- It may not be possible to maintain confidentiality on some issues which staff may need to refer.

### **Where can I find further information?**

- In "What to do at Leighton Park" published each term in the school calendar.

### **What happens if the complaint is not resolved?**

- If you feel that you have not been able to sort out a complaint on an informal basis you have the right to make a formal complaint. You may wish to involve your parents at this stage if you have not already done so.
- You or your parents should write to the Head setting out the complaint and what you want to be done about it. The Head may suggest a meeting to discuss the complaint but will in any case give you a written answer explaining what has been decided. You will not get into trouble for making the complaint if you believe that you have a good reason for doing so.
- The Head will keep a record of serious complaints from boarders and what happened to those complaints and will review them from time to time.

- Your parents can also use the School's formal complaints procedure.
- If you or your parents wish to appeal against a decision made by the school about your complaint, you or your parents should write to the Head explaining why there is still a problem. The Head will ask the Clerk to the Governors to arrange for your complaint to be reviewed by a panel of three people. Two will be Governors and one person will be independent of the running and management of the School. You and your parents may meet the panel to explain your concerns. You will be given details of the procedure to be followed. After the panel has considered the issues, they will give you a written response which may include making recommendations to the Head or the Governors.
- If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, complaints can also be directed to Ofsted on 08456 404040 or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) through Wokingham Borough Council on 0118 974 6000.

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