



## Lucton School Complaints Procedure

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This policy applies to the whole school.

Lucton School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. This outlines how to use our complaints system for parents.

A complaint by the parent or guardian regarding a current pupil will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we take action where appropriate

Parents will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

There are three stages to the Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

Stage 2 Formal Resolution

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

Timescales : We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this procedure, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the School is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School's website, and information about term dates is made available to parents and pupils periodically.

## **Stage 1      Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

*“How should I complain?”*

You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

Any member of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, pastoral matters with the Form Tutor, boarding issues with the Boarding Houseparents. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Nursery Co-ordinator, Head of the Prep School, Head of the Middle School, Head of Sixth Form, the Deputy Head or Headteacher.

*“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me”*

The school is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

*“I am not sure whether to complain or not”*

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to complain. If in doubt, you should contact the school as we are here to help.

*“What will happen next?”*

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. Alternatively we will contact you to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In either of the above two cases the member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

*“What happens about confidentiality?”*

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmistress and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the school’s policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be likely to happen where safeguarding issues arise, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

*“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”*

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen working days or a satisfactory resolution has not been reached then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

## **Stage 2      Formal Resolution**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you should write to the Headmistress within five working days. In most cases, the Headmistress will meet or /speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working 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 Headmistress to carry out further investigations. The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmistress 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 Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision. Please note that as some staff are not available through the holiday period, the complaint may take longer to resolve at this time. The Headmistress will aim to notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. This referral should be made in writing within 5 working days following the procedure below.

## **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 Chairman of the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. 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 Chairman of the Governors. The Chairman of the Governors, 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 be carried out.

After due consideration of all the relevant facts, the Panel will make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete within fourteen days of the Hearing. 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, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head.

A written record of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing is kept. Action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) is also recorded.

The Independent Schools' Inspectorate requires schools to publish the number of formal complaints recorded under the School's Complaints Procedure at Stage 2 or 3 in the preceding school year: In the academic year 2017/2018, the School received two formal complaints.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Parents may make complaints to Ofsted (Picadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, telephone 0300 1231231 and textphone 01616188524) and/or ISI (CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, telephone 020 7600 0100) if they so wish. The School will provide Ofsted or ISI, on request, a written record of all formal complaints and the action (if any) taken as a result of each complaint.

Whilst this complaints procedure applies to current children at the school, anyone subsequently wishing to appeal against an exclusion may write directly to the Governors, addressed to the Chairman of the Governors, care of the school office and request a review of the grounds for exclusion. Full details of the basis of the request for a review should be included. The Governors commit to dealing with such a request promptly, aiming for a maximum of two weeks. The Governors decision will be final and will be binding upon both parties, including the school, should the decision lead to reinstatement.

Parents may request a copy of the Complaints Procedure from the School Office together with the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the previous academic year.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Governors.

Sep 2018