

# Lucton School



## Complaints Procedure

Staff Responsible	Simon Jones – Bursar
Reviewed By	Governors
Date Reviewed	September 2021
Frequency of Review	Annually
Next Review	September 2022

The School refers to all staff and students at Lucton School, which includes Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the Prep School (Year 1-5), the Middle School (Year 6-8), the Senior School (Years 9-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12 &13).

The 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for the child.

## Related Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Terms and Conditions
- Admissions Policy
- Nursery Admissions Policy

This policy should be considered with the wider national framework of:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Education and Skills Act 2008

## Aims of the Policy

- To guide the procedures of the School in the event of a cause for complaint
- To allow for transparency in the event of a cause for complaint

## Introduction

This policy applies to the whole School.

Lucton School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may arise. 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. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

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 feel secure that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we act where appropriate

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

There was one complaint registered under the formal procedure (Stage 2) in the academic year 2020/21, which did not pertain to boarding.

## **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.

## **Outline of the Complaints Procedure**

There are three stages to the Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

### **Stage 1 Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction.

*"How should I complain?"*

You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter/email, 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.

However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Nursery Manager, Head of the Prep School, Head of Middle School, Head of Senior School, Head of Sixth Form, or the 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. Please 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 Headteacher 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 14 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 Headteacher **within five working days**. In most cases, the Headteacher 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 Headteacher to carry out further investigations. The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for their 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 Headteacher 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 via the Clerk to 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 working 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.

Parents may exercise their right to attend the panel hearing, though attendance is not mandatory. The School will do everything reasonably possible to facilitate the parent exercising their right to attend. Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. 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 14 working 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 also be sent in writing to the Headteacher and the Governors, and will be available for inspection on the school premise.

If a complaint has been considered by at all three stages of the policy, there is no further recourse within the scope of the policy. Any repeated attempt by a parent to raise the same complaint is therefore outside the scope of the policy.

Parents may make complaints to ISI and/or Ofsted. The School will provide ISI or Ofsted, on request, a written record of all formal complaints and the action (if any) taken as a result of each complaint.

### **Record of Complaints**

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.

### **Confidentiality**

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 Education and Skills 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints not involving safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years at the School.

Where there is a safeguarding angle, complaints must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pensionable age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.



# Parental Complaint Form (for internal use only)

<p><b>Complaint relating to:</b></p> <p><i>(name of member of staff)</i></p>
---

Name of pupil and class:		
From (Name of parent):		
Date / time of complaint:		
Member of staff receiving the complaint:		
Complaint:		
Action taken:		
Outcome:		
Action taken arising from the complaint (regardless of whether or not upheld):		
<u>Seen:</u>		
Complaints Co-Ordinator:		Date:
Headteacher:		Date: