

## Complaints Policy



Reviewed and approved:	Head and Chair of Governors January 2025
Next review due:	January 2026

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**THIS POLICY RELATES TO COMPLAINTS RAISED BY PARENTS OF CURRENT REGISTERED PUPILS ONLY. PLEASE SEE BELOW FOR FURTHER DETAILS.**

### Definitions and Applicability

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Dragon School Behaviour Policy
- Dragon School Disciplinary Procedure
- Fundraising Complaints Policy  
*[pending]*
- Dragon School Grievance Policy
- Dragon School Safeguarding Policy

This Policy applies to:

- The Prep School, the Pre-Prep School and EYFS;
- Parents of current registered School pupils;
- Parents of past pupils if the Complaint was initially raised when the child was a registered pupil; and
- Third parties (e.g. local residents or visitors to the School) who have legitimate grounds of complaint against the School. However, please note that this Policy is drafted primarily with parents in mind in accordance with Regulation 33 of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014), and therefore uses the term 'Parent' to refer to the person making the complaint.

This Policy does not apply to:

- The handling of any grievances raised by or disciplinary investigations relating to Dragon School colleagues. Please refer to the relevant School policies (listed above) for further information;
- An appeal against exclusion. The process for requesting a review of an exclusion is set out in the [Dragon School Exclusion Policy](#);
- Pupils, who may not themselves raise formal Complaints against the School, except in the case of boarders, who may follow the procedure set out in the [Boarding Handbook](#); and
- Complaints raised by a Parent on a persistent basis after the procedures set out in this Policy have already been applied to investigate and resolve them.

In this Policy:

- "Complaint" means any matter about which a Parent of a current registered Dragon School pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School
- "Head" means the Head of the School where the pupil is currently registered. This may be the Head of the Prep School or the Pre-Prep School

- “Parent” means those holding parental responsibility or other officially-appointed carers for current registered Dragon School pupils
- “School” means the Dragon School
- “Working Days” are Monday-Friday during term time only.

A diagram setting out the timelines (only) for the procedures set out in this Complaints Policy are included at Appendix 1.

### **School Commitment**

The School is committed to upholding excellent standards across all aspects of its provision to current pupils and their families. However, in the event that a Parent wishes to raise a Complaint, it will be dealt with reasonably, fairly and in a timely manner as detailed below.

Where Complaints are raised outside of School Working Days (or during periods of significant disruption to School life or during periods of staff absence), they may take longer to resolve than stated in the timelines set out below. There may also be circumstances in which it is necessary to reasonably extend these timescales. In all cases, the School will take reasonable steps to avoid unnecessary delay, and keep Parents informed of the progress of the Complaint investigation and resolution.

The School is committed to approaching Complaints in the spirit of resolution and positive outcomes, having regard as a priority to the interests of the child or children involved. Parents are encouraged to do the same, and, where it is possible, to clarify their preferred resolution for the Complaint made at the point of raising it with the School (whether this is under Stage One or Stage Two below). Appropriate resolutions will depend upon the nature of the Complaint made, but may include:

- an explanation, admission, or apology;
- an assurance of improved practice or reasonable adjustments to avoid a similar situation in the future; or
- an undertaking to make changes in policy, procedure or practice that will support improvements, along with an indication of relevant timescales.

Where a Complaint relates to a Protected Characteristic as defined under the Equality Act 2010, it will always be referred to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Protected Characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Further, if a Parent has a difficulty at any stage of the procedures set out under this Policy because of a disability or because English is not their first language, they should discuss this with the School as soon as possible.

The School is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and bullying and ensuring all staff are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect. All parties involved in matters under this Complaints Policy should act in line with this aim.

### **STAGE ONE – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

The School hopes that the majority of issues that may arise during the course of a pupil’s time at the School can be satisfactorily resolved informally through appropriate and regular communication with their Form Tutor or other relevant School colleagues. The School encourages Parents to discuss any issues with School staff in person where possible and as soon as the issue arises.

If a Parent wishes to raise a Stage One Complaint, they may do so in person, by telephone, or in writing. The School colleague to whom the Stage One Complaint is made will make a written record of the Complaint made.

The most appropriate colleague to whom a Parent's Stage One Complaint should be directed will depend upon the nature of the Complaint, but may be their child's:

- Form Tutor;
- Relevant class or subject teacher;
- Houseparent.

A complaint by a Third Party should be addressed in the first instance to the Office of the Chief Operating Officer.

If a Parent would prefer to direct their Complaint to a more senior colleague (Head of Year, Head of Section, Deputy Head, or Head) they may do so, however any investigation into the Complaint may be undertaken alongside another appropriate member of staff. The School will keep the Parent informed as to how their Complaint will be managed.

If the Stage One Complaint is not made in person, the School colleague to whom the Stage One Complaint is made will normally contact the Parent within two Working Days to gather any further information or to discuss the matter in more detail. Subject to any further information provided; any consultation needed with other colleagues; or any necessary investigation the School colleague will normally respond to the Parent in writing with an outcome and/or a suggested resolution for their Stage One Complaint within five further Working Days.

Parents must acknowledge receipt of the outcome and/or a suggested resolution of their Stage One Complaint. If a Parent is not satisfied with the suggested resolution, they must inform the School in writing with reasons within 10 Working Days in which case the Complaint will be escalated to Stage Two.

## **STAGE TWO – FORMAL RESOLUTION**

This stage of the procedure applies to Complaints which have not been resolved at Stage One, as well as Complaints of a sufficiently serious and/or complex nature that it is not reasonably possible to attempt to resolve it via the informal Stage One procedure.

In the event that a Parent wishes to raise a Stage Two Complaint, they must set out the issues in writing to the relevant Head and specifically use the phrase 'formal complaint'. If possible, the Parent should give an indication of the outcome or resolution sought when submitting their complaint. Where the Complaint was not first made as a Stage One Complaint, the Head may need to undertake some preliminary enquiries to ensure that the Stage Two Complaint procedure is the most appropriate means for satisfactorily resolving the Complaint.

Having reviewed the formal written Complaint, the Head will, wherever reasonably possible, meet with the Parent concerned to discuss the Complaint within five Working Days. During the course of this meeting, the parties are encouraged to fully consider the options for resolving the Complaint. If a resolution is not reached during the course of this meeting or shortly afterwards, the Head will authorise a formal investigation to be undertaken into the Complaint by appropriate School colleagues within two Working Days of the meeting, and the Parent will be notified. If it is appropriate in the circumstances, an external investigator may also be appointed to support with any investigation.

Any investigation will usually be completed by appropriate School colleagues within 10 Working Days of the Head's notification to the Parent, and will include appropriate proposed resolution(s) for the Stage Two Complaint. After fully considering the findings of the investigation and the proposed resolution(s) (and usually within five Working Days), the Head will communicate these to the Parent in writing.

Parents must acknowledge receipt of the investigation findings and proposed resolution of their Stage Two Complaint. If a Parent is not satisfied with the suggested resolution, they must inform the Head in writing with reasons within 10 Working Days in which case the Complaint will be escalated to Stage Three.

### **STAGE THREE – PANEL HEARING**

This stage of the procedure applies to Complaints which have not been resolved at Stages One or Two. Where this is the case, the Complaint will be referred to a named Governor ("**Nominated Governor**") who has been appointed by the Chair of Governors to call hearings of a Complaints Panel.

The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters relating to the Complaint made, all appointed by the Nominated Governor. One of the panel members will be independent of the management and running of the School (appointed with reference to the Department for Education's guidance on the suitability of persons to be appointed as an independent panel member, see [paragraph 8.2\(d\)](#)) ("**Independent Panel Member**"). The Independent Panel Member will be appointed in accordance with the terms of the Independent Panel Member Agreement which is held by the School Compliance Officer.

The Nominated Governor will acknowledge the Complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable and usually within 10 Working Days. If necessary, the Nominated Governor and/or the Complaints Panel may require further particulars of the Complaint to be supplied in advance of the hearing, in which case they must be supplied by the Parent or School colleagues as appropriate as soon as possible and in any event within five Working Days of the date of the hearing, along with any other documents reasonably considered by the Nominated Governor to be necessary for the Complaints Panel to review in advance of the hearing.

The Parent may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person (e.g. a relative or friend) although legal representation will not normally be appropriate. A parent who requires the assistance of a carer or interpreter may bring that person in addition to being accompanied by a relative or friend.

The Complaints Panel will endeavour to resolve the parents' Complaint immediately without the need for further investigation, and the final decision (including reasons) will be communicated to the Parent(s), the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, any School colleagues against whom the Complaint was made in writing within five Working Days of the hearing. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

In the event that the Complaints Panel agrees at the end of the hearing that further investigation is required, the hearing will be adjourned and further investigations will be completed as soon as reasonably possible and usually within 5 Working Days, and Parents will be advised of specific applicable timescales. Parents will be advised of timescales. Upon the completion of those further investigations, the Complaints panel will reconvene as soon as reasonably possible to make a decision and/or recommendations, which will be communicated in writing as set out in the previous paragraph.

A copy of the Complaints panel's decision will be held at the School and made available for inspection by the Chair of Governors and Head at any time.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Complaints Log**

The School maintains a Complaints Log, which contains details of all Complaints made at the Prep and the Pre-Prep, including the category of Complaint (e.g. Boarding, Pastoral, Academic), any resolution or any action taken by the School as a result of the Complaint (whether or not the Complaint was upheld), and analysis of any emerging patterns.

The Complaints Log includes details of (a) Stage One Complaints where those Complaints are handled by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or are referred to the Senior Leadership Team because they raise an issue relating to Protected Characteristics; (b) Stage Two Complaints; and (c) Stage Three Complaints.

Complaints not related to safeguarding will be retained on the Complaints Log for seven years, and safeguarding-related Complaints will be retained on the Complaints Log for 10 years. The Chair of Governors reviews the Complaints Log at least annually.

The number of formal complaints made during the course of the previous academic year, whether resolved at Stage Two or Stage Three, are recorded on the School website.

### **What if a Complaint is about the Head?**

If a Complaint is about the Head, Parent(s) should make their Complaint directly to the Chair of Governors. The Complaint will initially be investigated at Stage Two by the Chief Operating Officer on behalf of the Chair of Governors. If Parent(s) are not satisfied with the resolution, the Stage Three hearing procedure will then be followed.

### **Confidentiality**

All Complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and information contained within any Complaints will be processed in accordance with the School's [Privacy Notice](#). Correspondence, statements and records relating to the Complaint will 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 Act 2008 requests access to them.

### **EYFS**

Where a Complaint relates to the School's EYFS provision, the School confirms that:

- The Complaints Log is kept for at least three years;
- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the Parent notified of the resolution within 28 days; and
- If a Parent remains unhappy about the fulfilment of the EYFS provision, they may make a Complaint to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI):

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street

Manchester  
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 4666  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Web: <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
CAP House  
9 - 12 Long Lane

London  
EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100  
Email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
Web: <https://www.isi.net/parents-and-pupils/concerns-about-a-school>

The School will provide Ofsted and ISI with access to the School Complaints Log in respect of EYFS on request.

**Complaints that have proceeded to Stage Two since September 2023: 1**

**Complaints that have proceeded to Stage Three since September 2023 0**

Signed:



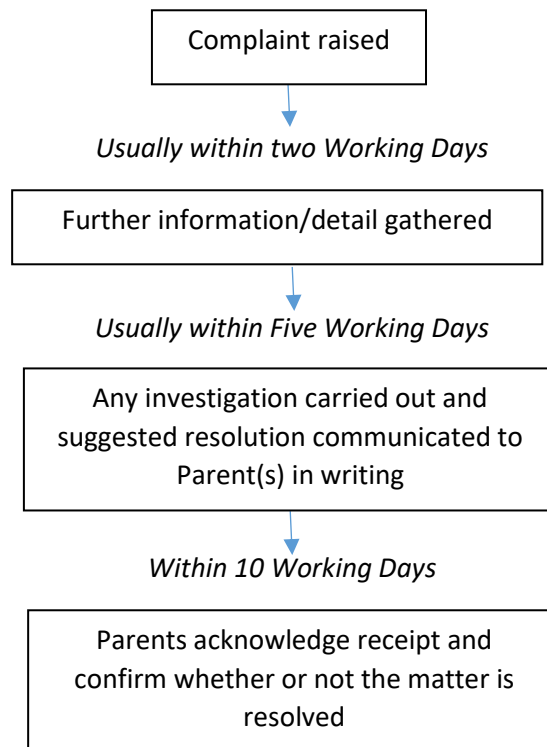
Chair of Governors

Date 24 January 2025

## **APPENDIX 1**

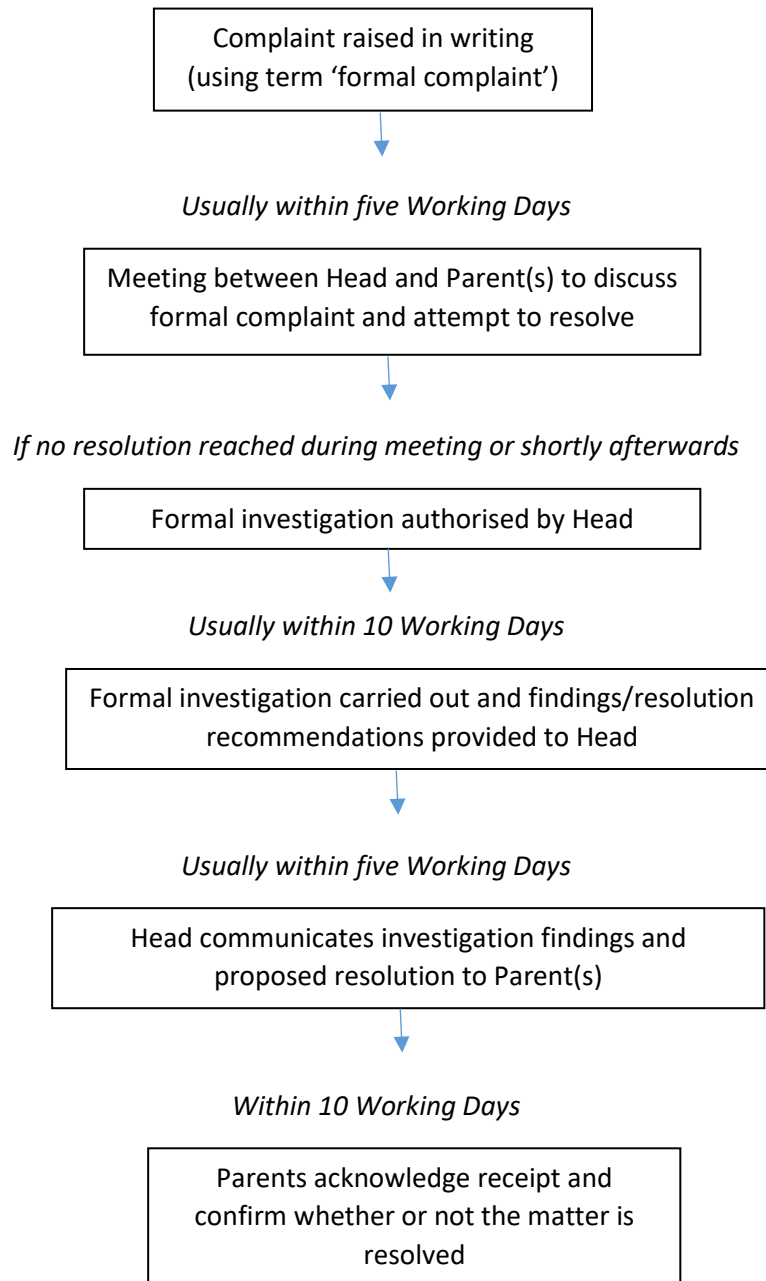
### **STAGE ONE – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

The timeframes set out in respect of the Stage One Procedure are the usual expected timeframes that the School would expect to follow, subject to the same caveats as set out in the Policy.



## STAGE TWO – FORMAL RESOLUTION

The timeframes set out in respect of the Stage Two Procedure are the usual expected timeframes that the School would expect to follow, subject to the same caveats as set out in the Policy.





**STAGE THREE – PANEL HEARING**

The timeframes set out in respect of the Stage Three Procedure are the usual expected timeframes that the School would expect to follow, subject to the same caveats as set out in the Policy.

