
Complaints Procedure

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1 Policy Statement

At Ewell Castle School we aim to work in close partnership with parents and ensure relationships are based on mutual respect. To this end, we want to know when things are, in the view of parents and/or pupils, not going right. If parents have any concerns about any aspect of their child's education we ask that they contact a member of staff as soon as possible. Parents are assured that all such expressions of concern will be treated seriously and followed up courteously and promptly.

At Ewell Castle School we:

- Define "complaint" as "any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks formal action by the school"
- Make every effort to deal with concerns informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of partnership
- Ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken
- Resolve concerns and complaints within twenty working days of the lodging of the concern or complaint. However, although we make every effort to keep to this timescale in all instances, we may need up to an additional fourteen working days where the twenty working day period falls during or across school holidays.
- Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils
- Ensure that no-one, including pupils, is penalised for making a complaint in good faith
- Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved (Note: This information is provided to ISI or Ofsted at their request)
- Review regularly, at senior management level, the written record of complaints and their outcomes
- Keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 162A of the Education 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.
- Deal with complaints made by parents of past pupils using this policy provided that the complaint relates to when the pupil was still registered as such.
- Do not use this policy to cover complaints about exclusions.

Ewell Castle School seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

This policy applies to all members of our school community including those in our EYFS setting. Ewell Castle School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the Equality Act 2010. Further details are available in the school's Equal Opportunity Policy. This policy is available to relevant parties on our website and on request.

The record of all written complaints and their outcomes is reviewed regularly by the Principal to identify whether review or change in practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made.

2 Procedures

Most concerns will be quickly resolved on an informal basis, following the procedure for concerns set out below. However, should a concern remain unresolved after the concerns procedure has been followed, parents are invited to raise a formal complaint following the complaints procedure below.

2.1 Allegations of Abuse

Where there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse or any potential child protection issue, the school will always make a referral to the relevant local social services department in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

2.2 Concerns Procedure

To raise a concern, please contact the following members of staff in the first instance:

- For a minor day-to-day issue, the relevant teacher, or your child’s Form Tutor/Teacher;
- For a subject-related academic concern, your child’s subject teacher;
- For a more serious pastoral concern, your child’s Head of Year in the Senior School or the Head of KS2, and the Deputy Head (also DSL) in the Preparatory (Prep) or Pre-Prep School
- For a more serious general academic concern, the relevant Head of Department in the Senior School or the Assistant Head, Teaching and Learning at the Prep School;
- In matters of non-academic services, the Bursar.

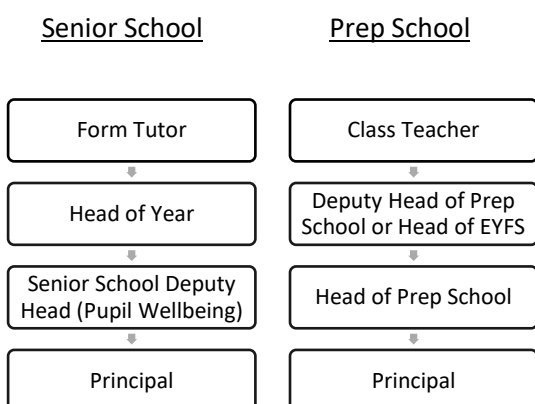
The member of staff to whom the concern is reported will, at their discretion, make a written record, including the date the concern was raised.

Ewell Castle School is committed to acknowledging receipt of a concern by telephone, email or letter within three working days of receipt.

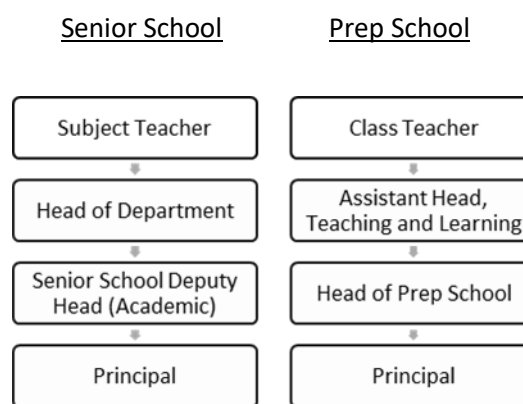
The member of staff to whom the concern is reported will then seek to resolve the matter informally without the needs for it to be escalated. However, should the matter not be resolved at the initial level then it will be escalated to the next level as set out in the table below.

2.3 Responsibilities in dealing with concerns

For pastoral Concerns:



For Academic Concerns:



It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly but, should the matter not be resolved within five working days, then parents may make a complaint under Stage 1 of the complaints procedure below.

2.3 Complaints Procedure

If a concern has been escalated to the Principal and remains unresolved, or the matter is of a very serious nature, parents may choose to raise a formal complaint. There are two further stages in the complaints procedure.

2.3.1 Stage One: Principal

The complaint should be addressed in writing to the Principal. Full written details of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details should be sent by the parents to the Principal by email to principal@ewellcastle.co.uk. Parents should also indicate what they envisage as the desired outcome.

The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Principal will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter and, if possible, reach a resolution. It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Principal may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and/or may involve one or more of the school's Governing Body. In exceptional circumstances, or where there is a conflict of interest (perceived or actual) then the Principal may choose to appoint an external investigating officer.

Should the Principal be the subject of the complaint the Chair of governors will appoint an external investigating officer and shall appoint a member of the Governing body to hear the stage 1 complaint.

Once the Principal (or governor if applicable) 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, normally within twenty working days of receipt of the complaint. The Principal (or governor if applicable) will also give reasons for the decision.

In accordance with Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) legislation, the school will resolve any formal complaints regarding pupils in our EYFS setting within twenty-eight calendar days of having received the complaint and will inform the complainants of the outcome.

2.3.2 Stage Two: Panel Hearing

If parents are not satisfied with decision of the Stage 1 complaint; they may appeal to the Chair of the school's Governing Body ("the Chair"). Parents should make their appeal in writing to the Chair in confidence care of the School, within five calendar days of the decision of the Principal.

The Chair will convene a panel of at least two Governing Body members and one person independent of the management and running of the School to consider the complaint as soon as is practicable but in any event no later than twenty-eight working days (excluding school holidays) from receipt of the appeal.

The independent panel member is a person who has held a position of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at

other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force. No member of the panel will have any involvement with any matter detailed in the complaint.

To facilitate informed discussion of the issue, all paperwork to be presented at the meeting is to be supplied to the Chair in advance of the panel hearing.

Parents are invited to attend this hearing and may be accompanied if they so wish; in which case they are required to notify the Chair of the name and occupation of such a person, five working days in advance of the hearing.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

The Panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of these will be given to the complainant in writing, and also, where relevant, to the person complained about, within 10 working days of the hearing.

These will be stored securely at the school and made available for inspection as required by the Governors and the Principal. All records relating to individual complaints are kept confidentially except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, requests access to them.

The record of all written complaints and their outcomes (Complaints Log) is reviewed regularly by the Principal to identify whether review or change in practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

Alternatively, parents and pupils are also able to make a complaint directly to ISI and/or (for Early Years and Foundation stage) OFSTED on 0300 123 1231.

3 Registered Complaints

The number of formal complaints registered under the Formal Procedure during the Academic School Year is administered by the Principal's Office.

4 Review and Development

4.1 Procedure

This document, together with the effectiveness of its procedures, will be reviewed annually by the Executive Leadership Team and Governing Body and as events or legislation change requires.

4.2 Links with other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Equal Opportunities
- Safeguarding Policy
- Parental Contract