



Complaints Procedure (Abingdon School and Abingdon Prep School)

Introduction

Abingdon School and Abingdon Prep School have long prided themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to their pupils. However, if parents or others do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

For Senior School pupils a simplified procedure is also available, entitled "[Complaints Procedure \(pupils\)](#)", which is available on the website under Policies and guidance is given to boarders in the Boarding Handbook. Pupils' complaints are considered seriously, and where they cannot be resolved to the pupil's satisfaction, an appropriate outcome will be reached which balances the rights and duties of pupils. Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

This procedure also applies to parents of EYFS pupils (the Reception year). In line with National Minimum Standard 17 and 18 for boarding schools this procedure is also available for boarders.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Abingdon School will make this procedure available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's Housemaster (or Form Teacher/Subject Teacher at the Prep School). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster/Form Teacher/Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult others, such as a head of department, the Second Master, the Deputy Head, the Director of Finance and Operations or the Headmaster.

3. Complaints made directly to a head of department, Deputy Head, Second Master, or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster or Form Teacher/Subject Teacher unless the head of department, Deputy Head, the Second Master or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Housemaster/Form Teacher/Subject 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 ten School working days, or in the event that the Housemaster/Form Teacher/Subject Teacher and the 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. For serious complaints written records of the complaint and outcomes will be sent by the Housemaster for review by the Headmaster.
5. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. To note is that although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by e-mail. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
2. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
4. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
5. Once the Headmaster 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 within a further 7 school working days. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a Governor, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
2. 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 Governors who will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days. The independent panel member will be appointed depending on the complaint itself, to ensure that the panel member has the requisite skills and interests.

3. 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 5 days prior to the hearing.
4. One other person may accompany the parents to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
6. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
7. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days if at all possible.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

For EYFS complaints, the Prep School will notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints 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.

Abingdon School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any complaints will be kept for at least 6 years.

EYFS and Boarding Complaints

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net.

Complaints regarding boarding welfare may be made directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100.

Second Master

Last Internal Review: Lent Term 2018

Last Governor Review: Lent Term 2018

Next Governor Review: Lent Term 2019

The number of formal complaints in the latest academic year is available from the Head's PA on request.