

Whole School Complaints Policy

including EYFS and Boarding

Person responsible for this policy:

Paul David
Headmaster

Date of Policy Review:

January 2022

Next Review Date:

January 2023



Dulwich Prep
Cranbrook

Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in EYFS.

Complaints Policy

The School welcomes suggestions and comments and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may arise. Many concerns that pupils and you have do not necessarily call for complaint, but should still be brought to the school's attention. Help can only be given regarding issues that are known about.

A complaint 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 manner
- Parents are aware that we listen to and take any complaints seriously
- We take action where appropriate

This policy is available to the parents of currently registered pupils and of prospective pupils (via the school website, or parents may request a hard copy from the Upper School, Little Stream or Nash House Offices). It is applicable to all pupils in the school including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It also applies to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was on roll.

The school will endeavour to deal with complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, and where appropriate, will take action. It is the school's policy that complaints from parents should not be mentioned to the child involved nor should they rebound in anyway on the child. Pupils themselves are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

Wherever possible it is best to raise an issue face to face with the person most closely concerned with the issue, for example the Form Teacher, Subject Teacher, Tutor, or Head of Year. Please make a mutually convenient appointment with the person concerned allowing for a suitable period of time to discuss the issues fully. A concern about sport should be raised with the Head of P.E. and a concern about music with the Director of Performing Arts. These staff may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. This normally results in the matter being resolved within two working days and to your satisfaction. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, in Upper School, the Deputy Head; the Assistant Head Academic; the Assistant Head Pastoral; the Assistant Head Welfare or the Head of Subject. In Little Stream or Nash House, the initial point of contact would normally be the Form Teacher, Head of Year or the Head of Little Stream or Nash House, as appropriate. For more serious matters the issue may be raised with the Headmaster directly. Again, the matter will normally be resolved quickly to both parties' satisfaction. In these instances, the time frame to manage the complaint will normally be two working days and feedback will be verbal providing that a satisfactory outcome has been achieved. On occasion, it may be necessary to undertake longer investigation into the matters raised in a complaint. However, a period of no longer than 28 working days should cover the period from the lodging of the complaint to its resolution.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

If your complaint cannot be satisfactorily dealt with on an informal basis, you may make a complaint in writing to the Headmaster and the school will:

- Acknowledge your complaint in writing within five working days
- Inform you as to how the matter will be dealt with and how matters will proceed
- Carry out any necessary investigations
- Send a letter to you explaining the reasons for the conclusion, and any action being taken or proposed.

Your complaint will remain confidential and all information will be treated with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmaster and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may have to be informed.

We cannot rule out the possibility of the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly the identities of those involved. This would only be likely to be necessary where a child's safety is involved or an illegal act has occurred. You would be kept fully informed.

Information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file. However, we may not be able to pursue anonymous complaints.

Any action, which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of a complaint, will be handled confidentially within school.

A complaint of this nature will be managed within fourteen working days.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome of the formal stage of the procedure and that you will feel that your concerns have been taken seriously and your complaint dealt with to your satisfaction. However, if this is not the case you may, within five working days, write to the Bursar, who acts as Clerk to the Governors, to ask for the matter to be referred to a panel hearing. The Chairman of the Cranbrook Management Board will appoint a panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. It is the panel's task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Chair of the panel will invite you to a meeting, agree an agenda and you will be asked to present any papers you may have for circulation before the meeting. Should you wish to do so, you may attend and may be accompanied at this panel hearing.

This Chair of the panel will:

- Acknowledge your complaint in writing within five working days
- Inform you how the matter will be dealt with and how matters will proceed
- Carry out any necessary investigations
- Send a letter to explain the findings and recommendations to you and, where appropriate, the person complained about, along with reasons for the findings and recommendations and any action being taken or proposed. Following an opportunity for you to review these findings, this

will also be made available within school for inspection by the Headmaster and the Chairman of Governors

- This process will, where possible, be completed within 28 working days from the acknowledgement of your complaint. Any complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.

If a complaint is made just before or during the school holidays, there may be the need to reasonably adjust these timescales; however the complaint will be handled as swiftly as is practicable and you will be kept informed.

OFSTED and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) will, on request, be provided with a written record of all complaints made during a specific period and the action taken as a result of those complaints.

All 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

If your complaint has still not been resolved to your satisfaction you may wish to seek independent legal advice.

External Complaints Organisations

Parents and pupils are advised that they may also take their complaints to the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Current contact details are available from the ISI website at [concerns for parents](#).

Alternatively, parents and pupils are advised that for matters in respect of the Safeguarding of children they may contact the Area Safeguarding Service at 30 Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4AE or call her office on 03000 412284.

For matters relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) parents may contact Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231.

The school will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

The school provides for a written record to be kept of all formal complaints including

- (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and

- (ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

This record is reviewed annually by the Headmaster

The number of complaints received during the 2020/21 year was 2.

Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

Dulwich Prep Cranbrook is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants may have with the school. However, we do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complainants as "those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints" (taken from DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016).

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process whilst still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are dealing with the issues, and seeks the involvement of another member of staff
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education (DfE)
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in

person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headmaster or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking to the complaint.

If the behaviour continues the Headmaster will write to the complainant explaining that his/her behaviour is unreasonable and asking him/her to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concern about the complainant's behaviour and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Dulwich Prep Cranbrook.