

## Whole School Complaints Procedure for Parents (Includes EYFS and Out of School Provision)

Please also refer to the '**Whole School Behaviour Policy and Procedures Including Rewards and Sanctions**', '**Whole School Exclusions Policy and Procedures**' and the '**Cranford School Trust Parent Contract and Terms and Conditions**' document.

### Introduction:

Cranford School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if existing\* parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure. Cranford School makes its '**Whole School Complaints Procedure for Parents**', available to all parents of pupils\* and of prospective pupils on the School's website. We will ensure that parents of pupils and those of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published and available by downloading a soft copy from the website or in hard copy format upon request in the main School Office.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Cranford School will make 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 '**Whole School Complaints Procedure for Parents**' 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.

*\* Please note: This procedure applies to **existing** parents, i.e. those who have children currently attending Cranford School. In accordance with the ISSRs/DfE Regulations, this Procedure applies to former pupils of the School, but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. (For parents of former pupils, the School will follow this '**Whole School Complaints Procedure for Parents**' as far as is necessary, if such parents will not engage with the complaints process, unless they are clearly satisfied with the response, a Panel Hearing will take place). The definition of a 'pupil' throughout is as defined by Section 3 of the Education Act 1996 and DfE 'a person for whom education is being provided at the school'.*

Parents can be assured that all 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 which you (or your child) raise in good faith.

### **The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure:**

#### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution:**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Tutor/Key Person as appropriate. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Key Person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Year/Head of Key Stage/Senior Deputy Head/Headmaster as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Senior Deputy Head/Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor, Head of Department or Head of Year unless it is deemed appropriate for the matter to be dealt with at the higher level immediately.
- The Form Tutor/Head of Department/Head of Year will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved normally within 5 working days\*\* or in the event that the aforementioned member of staff and the parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint to the Chair of Governors.

#### **Stage 2: Formal Resolution:**

- 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 then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The Headmaster may decide to move a complaint to a Stage 2 Formal Resolution, should the issue be an on-going concern for the parents and the Headmaster feels that it would be more appropriate to deal with it at this level. In the event that this occurs, parents will be notified of this.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet with or communicate with by telephone or email the parents concerned normally within 5 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff and/or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Governors will give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. In this case, if the complainant indicates a wish to continue onto Stage 3, the Panel Hearing will go ahead unless the complainant later indicates that he or she is now satisfied and does not wish to proceed further.

*\*\* Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time. During holiday periods, complaints will be acknowledged as soon as is practicable.*

### **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 Director of Finance and Operations 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 three persons not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The School will follow the guidance from the DfE as to the identity of an independent Panel member. The Director of Finance and Operations, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 working days\*\*.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing if they wish. (Examples include relatives or friends). Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- A Panel Hearing will go ahead notwithstanding the subsequent decision of a parent not to attend. If necessary, the Panel will consider the parent's complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning the composition of the Panel. If, however, the parent later indicates that he or she is now satisfied and does not wish to proceed further a Panel Hearing will not be required.
- 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.
- After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

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- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 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 email or otherwise given to the complainant, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair 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 Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

### **Time Frame 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.

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### **Recording Complaints:**

- The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints dealt with at Stage 2 or Stage 3 of our policy and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld), together with a record of any action(s) taken by the School. Any complaints relating to our EYFS are clearly differentiated from complaints from other areas of the School.
- The School will keep copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations). 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 investigations (if appropriate);
  - Witness statements (if appropriate);
  - Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;

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 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.

The School's Senior Leadership Team monitor the Complaints Log on a termly basis to identify any patterns and these are raised with the Governors by the Headmaster (or his designated deputy in his absence).

Parents also have the right to contact the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) in the event of a complaint about the School. The contact number for ISI is 0207 6000 100 or via email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

For information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, parents of current, registered pupils are asked to make a written request to the Headmaster. These records are available for inspection on the premises at all times.

### **Complaints Relating to the Requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS:**

Cranford School will provide ISI and Ofsted where applicable, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least ten years. Written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements via the online DfE [school complaints form](#). Parents are made aware of contact details for Ofsted via poster on the entrance doors to Reception classrooms. Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 1234234 or by email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The School will also provide information to Ofsted should the complaint relate to a safeguarding issue.

Parents will be notified about an Inspection once the School has been notified and a copy of the final Inspection Report will be available on the School website or upon request to the Head of EYFS or from the main School Office.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the School year 2021-2022:

1

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the School year 2022-2023:

2

Reviewed: September 2018: Headmaster and Governors

Reviewed: September 2019: Headmaster and Governors

Reviewed: September 2020: Headmaster and Governors

Reviewed: September 2021: Headmaster and Governors

Reviewed: September 2022: Headmaster and Governors

Reviewed: September 2023: Headmaster and Governors

Review Due: September 2024 by Headmaster and Governors