



Gosfield School

Complaints Procedure

This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils, parents and staff are encouraged to share their views and opinions and any concerns they may have. People who have concerns or complaints, whether they are adults or children, should feel that they can be voiced and that they will be considered seriously.

Gosfield School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint about the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or any other aspect of the School, it will be dealt with by the School with care and in accordance with this policy.

Gosfield School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day, and the School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. The School does not distinguish between a concern and a complaint and it is hoped that parents will always contact the School if they have concerns or worries.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Gosfield 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 complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. The formal complaints procedure was invoked twice during the academic year 2019-2020, resulting in one panel hearing at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The procedure is designed to enable the School Governors, Principal and staff to foster good relations with parents by:

- Discouraging the harbouring of grievance
- Assisting with the resolution of individual concerns in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality
- Enabling concerns and complaints to be settled as near as possible to their point of origin
- Ensuring that complaints are dealt with fully, promptly and fairly

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.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, sensitively 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 raise in good faith.

Principles Behind the Complaints Procedure

- A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.
- Feedback will actively be sought from pupils (through the Pupil Parliament) and parents (through informal and formal meetings and surveys) in order to minimise complaints and maximise accountability.
- Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome that balances the rights and duties of pupils without unreasonable delay.
- At all stages of dealing with a complaint, pupils may always be accompanied by a parent or another appropriate adult.
- The Principal will be informed of all complaints and their outcome.
- A written record will be kept of all formal complaints and of whether or not they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing.
- The number of formal complaints for the preceding School year will be reported to the Governing Body and complaints will be monitored regularly.
- Pupils are not penalised for making complaints in good faith.

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

It is hoped that any complaints or concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint, they should contact their child's class teacher/tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Head of Prep and Nursery, Deputy Head Academic, Head of Pastoral or the Principal, as appropriate.

Complaints made directly to the Head of Prep and Nursery, Deputy Head Academic, Head of Pastoral or the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the member of staff concerned will attempt to resolve the matter as soon as possible and within **5 working days**, subject to the availability of the appropriate staff and children.

The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints and concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within **5 working days**, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. (It should be noted that during holiday periods, concerns will be dealt with as and when possible, given likely staff absences). If, however, the complaint is against the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2 Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the Principal, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.

In most cases, the Principal, or in his absence the Deputy Head Academic or Head of Prep, will speak to the parents concerned within **2 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 Principal to carry out further investigations.

The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Principal is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for the decision. The written decision will normally be issued within **28 days** of receiving the

complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Principal will write to the parents within the **28 day** period, stating why he is unable to issue his decision and informing the parents when he will do so.

If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his decision.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Chair of Governors (at the school address) to request a panel hearing. They should do so within **28 days** of receiving the Principal's letter informing them of his decision.

The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel, appointed by or on behalf of the Chair of Governors, for further consideration.

The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these shall be independent of the management and running of the school and shall not be a school governor.

The complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and within **10 working days**.

If the Chair of Governors deems it necessary, he may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within 5 days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.

The parents may attend the meeting and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However, should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within **14 days** of the first hearing wherever possible but within **28 days** of that hearing in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The Chair of Governors will write to the parents informing them of the panel's decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.

The panel's decision and any recommendations will be sent in writing, by electronic mail or otherwise, to the Principal, the complainant and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.

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 Principal.

Recording Complaints

Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or have proceeded to a panel hearing, all correspondence, statements, records and action taken will be kept in a Complaints File. This will remain confidential except to the extent required where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Senior leaders and governors will maintain oversight of the records in order to determine the appropriate implementation of this policy and to respond to any patterns of complaint which may be apparent, and in particular, any safeguarding concerns.

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)

All correspondence is kept on file for three years.

Gosfield 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.

Parents may, if they feel it necessary, contact Ofsted or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) to discuss a potential complaint involving the School's EYFS provision directly. Ofsted can be contacted by linking to their website at www.ofsted.gov.uk or by telephoning 0300 123 4666. ISI can be contacted by linking to their website at www.isi.net or by telephoning 0207 600 0100. The Department for Education can be contacted by linking to their website at www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe or by telephoning 0370 000 2288.

The School will notify all parents about an inspection, and supply to parents a copy of the final inspection report via the website or in hard copy if requested.

In the academic year 2019/2020 there was a total of two complaints that reached the formal stage, one at Stage 2 and one Stage 3.

GLM

November 2020

Ratified by the Governing Council of Gosfield School

Signed _____ (Chair of Governors) Date _____