

ANNEX 5

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

References:

- A. Independent Schools Inspectorate: Handbook for the Inspection of Schools – The Regulatory Requirements, Part 7, September 2010 (www.isi.net)
- B. Reference Guide to the Key Standards in each type of Social Care inspected by Ofsted (Reference: 080117 (www.ofsted.gov.uk))
- C. National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools dated September 2010.
- D. The Early Years Foundation Stage: Statutory Framework 2008 (www.teachernet.gov.uk)
- E. EYFS Guidance for Registered Settings, ISI, September 2010

Introduction

Vinehall School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. Vinehall School will make the complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website or on request from the school office during the school day, and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 6(3)(f) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 (as subsequently amended), Vinehall 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 the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. The vast majority of parental concerns are best approached in this way.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's form tutor or the teacher involved in the complaint causing concern. Form teachers are the normal first point of contact. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form tutor or teacher concerned cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult the relevant head of department or member of the senior management.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department / senior teacher / Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / the Deputy Head / the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or subject teacher unless the head of department / senior teacher / Deputy Head / Head deems it appropriate for him / her to deal with the matter personally.
- The teacher who is dealing with the complaint 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 fourteen days or in the event that the teacher dealing with the complaint 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.
- Complaints or concerns (other than minor routine matters) which are received by email should be forwarded to the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head and kept in the child's file.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint was addressed initially by a member of staff and cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head, making it clear that they were not satisfied with the result of their initial enquiry and that they wish to make a formal complaint.
- If the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head received the initial informal enquiry and the parents are still dissatisfied with the response, they should write stating that they are still dissatisfied and the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head will then treat the matter as a formal complaint.
- In each of the above situations, the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head will consider the complaint and decide the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head will meet the parents concerned, normally within fourteen 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 Head to carry out further investigations and to consult the Chairman of Governors. If the Head of Pre-Prep has received the formal complaint then she/he will brief the Head and the Head will continue the process.
- The Head of Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) / Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant factors have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the Head's decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following the failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors, who will call a hearing 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, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school (see Appendix 1). Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the board of governors. The Chairman of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within twenty-one days.
- 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 all such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing. Likewise, if either the parent(s) or the school decide to submit written information to the Panel, this information will also be made available to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing 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. The Head (or his deputy in the case of absence) will also attend the hearing to represent the school's view concerning the complaint. He may be accompanied by a member(s) of staff who has/have been involved in the case.

- If possible the Panel will resolve the parental 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 that they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.
- The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within fourteen days of 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 board of governors and the Head.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel hearing.

Timescales

Please be aware that the timescales identified in this procedure are relevant to term-time only and are subject to change in the school holiday periods.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required of the school by paragraph 6(3)(f) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 (as subsequently amended), by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Recording

A written record is to be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, for regular review by the Head or a senior member of staff.

Confidential files on all complaints should be maintained by the Head's PA, kept together and cross-referenced with other files as necessary. The files should contain simple but clear notes of conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This also applies to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, since misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainants. The notes can be agreed with parents.

The record should contain the following information as appropriate:

- Date when issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of parents' concern
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome

NOTES

Complaints Regarding the Welfare of Boarders

Whilst complaints by parents of boarders in relation to their welfare should be raised under the above procedure, further guidance is contained at Annex 5A, in accordance with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, for boarders and their parents to raise complaints, and which is made available to boarders, their parents and staff for their information.

Written Complaints Relating to the Requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) refers to children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old at Vinehall in our Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) share the Complaints Policy with the whole school

Parents can make a complaint to Ofsted (and/or ISI) should they so wish and Vinehall School will provide 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 such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years. All written complaints relating to the requirements are investigated within 28 days and complainants are notified of the outcome. Details for contacting Ofsted are in our Handbook for Parents on the website.

A copy of the complaints procedure is available on request and on the website.

Formal Complaints in Academic Year 2010 – 2011

The number of formal complaints received by the school in academic year 2010 – 2011: nil.

Appendices:

1. Independent Member of the Panel (for internal school use only)
2. Notes for Staff (for internal school use only)

Related Documents:

Annex 5A: Procedure for Complaints from Boarders and Parents.
Annex 13: Complaints Policy for Day and Boarding Pupils.