



LEWESTON

PREP

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

At Leweston Preparatory School, staff, parents and pupils work together to create a happy, caring learning environment, which truly reflects the Christian beliefs and ethos of the Foundation.

This Parental Complaints Procedure Policy provides equality of access and opportunity to all in a spirit of Christian love, with understanding and acceptance of individual differences and respect for all persons. The guiding principle for all aspects of school life is to treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated. This embraces the understanding that everyone has responsibilities, rights and deserves respect.

This policy meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All members of staff have been given access to this policy as part of their induction and it has been explained to and is accessible to all parents. This is communicated to the EYFS parents during the Welcome Sessions.

Leweston Preparatory School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if current parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the following procedure. (Parents of past pupils will receive a response to any concerns they raise, but the following procedure does not apply.) The policy is available for all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and Leweston School will ensure that any parent or prospective parent who requests it, is made aware that this document is available to download from the website or that a hard copy can be requested from the Headteacher's Secretary.

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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. A formal complaint is defined as one which proceeds to a Panel Hearing (Stage 3).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that no child will be penalised for a complaint raised by a parent or child in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The timelines set out below are in school days. A school day is defined as a week day during the school term.

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five school 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 school days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 school days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- However, if parents have a complaint they should, at the earliest possible opportunity, raise the matter initially with the Form Teacher if it is an academic matter or pastoral matter. In the vast majority of cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult other senior staff.
- Complaints made directly in the first instance to the Deputy Head or the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher, unless the Deputy Head or Headteacher deem it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form 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 10 school days or in the event that the staff member 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.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman 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 Headteacher (or Bursar, if concerning a Bursarial matter). The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate cause of action to take. In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five school days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may however be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. In accordance with our EYFS provision the record of complaints is kept for at least three years.
- Once the Headteacher 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 10 school days of the completion of the investigation. The Headteacher will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Deputy Chair of Governors 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 at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; two will be Governors and one will be independent of the management and running of the school. The Deputy Chair of Governors, on behalf of the panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 school 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 such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five school 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 is not permitted.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

• Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and, if necessary, appoint an investigator. After consideration of all facts that the Panel considers to be relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel's findings and, if applicable, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headteacher (or Bursar), the Governors and, where relevant, the person of whom the complaint has been made, normally within 10 school days of the hearing. The Panel will give reasons for its decision. In accordance with our EYFS provision, complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

The decision of the Panel is final.

NOTES:

1. 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. 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)

2. In accordance with our EYFS provision, the setting will provide Ofsted (and ISI) 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.

3. Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State, where disclosure is required by the ISI in the course of the school's inspection or under any other legal authority.

Should a parent be dissatisfied with the school's complaints procedure they may contact: Ofsted (and/or ISI):

Email enquiries@ofsted.co.uk

Ofsted South
Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol
BS1 6NL

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Ofsted Telephone Number: **08456404040**

Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Email: info@isi.net

ISI Telephone Number: 020 7600 0100

Fax 020 7776 8849

Boarding Complaints

Parents should be aware that, in accordance with the National Minimum Boarding Standards, Standard 5, there is a separate complaints procedure for boarders. If the school procedures are not found satisfactory for a complaint concerning a boarder, parents may also contact:

Commission for Social Care Inspection (Local Authority Designated Officer)

Poole Office Unit 4
New Fields Business Park
Stinsford Road
Poole, Dorset BH17 0NF

As required by National Minimum Boarding Standards, there is also a separate complaints procedure available to staff and boarders.

In the preceding school year Leweston Prep registered one complaint under the formal procedure.

Pupil Boarding Complaints

Parents should also be aware that a separate complaints procedure exists, in accordance with Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, for boarding pupils to raise complaints. A written record is kept of serious complaints and their outcome, for regular review by the Head. Complaints will be resolved without unreasonable delay, either to the pupil and parents' satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. No pupil will be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

rev. November 2011 PG