

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**Policy Owner – Headmaster**

**This is a whole School policy and applies to all members of Cophthorne Preparatory School including EYFS.**

### **Introduction**

Cophthorne Prep School has long prided 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 with care and in accordance with this procedure.

Cophthorne Prep 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 Cophthorne Prep 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 the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 3(f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Cophthorne Prep 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.

The school provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld), including those relating to EYFS and to boarding.

The titles of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Headmaster and Bursar are intended to be used in this document in a general sense and are non-gender specific.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school 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 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 [or your child] raises in good faith.

The three-stage Complaints Procedure

### **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head/Head of Pre-Prep.
- Complaints made directly to Deputy Head/Head of Pre-Prep will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless Deputy Head/Head of Pre-Prep deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The class 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 seven working days or in the event that the class teacher 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. Please note the seven working day time frame applies during term-time. If in the holidays it will be as soon as practicable.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, 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 should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Please note the seven day time frame applies during term-time. If in the holidays it will be as soon as practicable.
- 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 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. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head 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/her decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. Please note that if there is no response from the parent after twenty-eight days from receipt of decision, the school will consider the matter closed

### **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to Clerk of the Governors (The Bursar) 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 the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Bursar, 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 in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall 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 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 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- 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 electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. 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 Head.

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

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

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

### **Recording Complaints**

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)

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and actions taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld).

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Cophorne Prep 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.

### **EYFS**

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 receiving the complaint.

A record is kept of all complaints and their outcome; these will be made available to Ofsted as required.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or ISI:

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)]
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)]

### **BOARDING**

This Complaints Policy is also relevant for parents of boarders. The schools written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

**The number of complaints registered** under the formal procedure (Stage 3) during the preceding school year is available from the Headmaster by request.

AMENDED BY POLICY OWNER: SUMMER 2021  
NEXT REVIEW: SUMMER 2022