



The Abbey

The independent school for girls aged 3-18.

Complaints Procedure

The Abbey School, Reading



17 Kendrick Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5DZ
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Registered Charity No 309115. The Abbey School exists to educate academically able girls.



The Abbey School Complaints Procedure is a whole school procedure and also applies to our Early Years' provision in Knell House (EYFS).

The School has in place the following policies to support good behaviour in the school.

These are:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Uniform Policy
- Serious Disciplinary Issues Policy for Pupils
- Appeal against Expulsion Policy

The School's active and ongoing communication with parents provides many forums for any concerns to be tabled. The vast majority of concerns received are resolved informally, within a few days and contact with parents is recorded using the School's Pastoral Forms and dated when the issue has been resolved.

Nonetheless, parents may wish to raise a concern or complaint; they can expect it to be dealt within three stages which are outlined within this document. The majority of complaints are resolved at the informal-stage.

The Abbey School defines a complaint to be one which has been submitted to the School, formally in writing, with reference to a cause of specific and focused dissatisfaction and following the School's Complaints Policy procedures. Parents are encouraged to outline from the beginning the exact nature of their concern and the remedy sought.

Complaints are focused on an actual or a perceived problem, arising from an event or process under the jurisdiction of the school, which causes parents to be concerned or dissatisfied about their daughter's experience or their own. Parents may not complain on behalf of others, and groups of parents who wish to raise a matter are required to do so separately, as individual families.

Definitions for the purposes of the policy:

- a) In The Abbey School policies, 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian' where this applies.
- b) When a complaint is first raised with a senior member of staff, it is defined as informal notification of dissatisfaction or concern. Should it not be resolved at the first stage of this procedures but progress to stage 2, the formal stage it will be defined as a 'formal complaint'.
- c) Under 'stage 1' a 'senior member of staff' is defined as one of the following: Head of Whole School, Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School, Deputy Heads, Assistant Heads, Heads of Department or Heads of Year.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and parents notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. Parents of girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage have the additional option of making a complaint to OFSTED, should they wish to do so. Ofsted may be contacted at www.ofsted.gov.uk or in writing to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Any parent is entitled to make a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

If a parent has a complaint about the school, the following procedure should be followed.

STAGE 1: Informal notification of dissatisfaction or concern

- In the first instant the parent should contact the most appropriate senior member of staff by either telephone letter or email, or by arranging a meeting, with the aim of resolving the matter on an informal basis. A notification under this stage should normally take place within 30 working days of the event taking place, or of the matter first coming to the attention of the parents, in order to facilitate an effective investigation and a speedy solution.
- The school will normally deal with the matter within 10 working days of receipt of the notification. A record will be kept of the informal complaint in a file with the Head, indicating whether it was resolved at this stage or proceeded to Stage 2. Such records will be kept for three years. The investigation will be managed by an appropriate senior member of staff.
- It may be appropriate to invite the parent in to school, but this is not an essential stage in the process. Where the parents are not invited in they will receive a report back either (orally or in writing) and the aim will be to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned. Where it is deemed that there are issues to address, the school will take appropriate action.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- A formal complaint must be in writing and addressed to the Head of Whole School, Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School, stating clearly that parents want to make a formal complaint under the second stage of the procedures. They should state both the nature of the complaint and the remedy sought, and include all relevant information.
- Parents should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, parents will be advised that they will be dealt with under stage 1.
- The Head (or her representative) will acknowledge the letter within 5 working days.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, and the relevant matters have been investigated, a meeting with the parents will be arranged. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Head may also choose to involve another senior member of staff in the meeting and in the determination.
- The Head will write to the parent to confirm the outcome of the meeting or investigation and giving reasons for her decision.
- A formal complaint will normally be dealt with within 28 working days of receipt. Formal complaints received at or near the end of the school day will be deemed to have been received on the next working day.
- A formal complaint will be logged in a central record in the Head's office together with the information about whether it is resolved at this stage or proceeds to a panel hearing. Records of formal complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Stage 3: Appeals Procedure

- If the parent is still not satisfied, he or she may appeal to the Chairman of Governors, invoking the next stage of the process. A Complaints Panel Hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Head at stage 2.
- The parent should make written representation to the Chairman of Governors within 15 working days of the date of receipt of the formal written confirmation from the Head. The notice of appeal should set out the reasons for the appeal.
- On receipt of the appellant's documentation, the Head and/or main investigating manager will then have 15 working days to submit her case for the action taken.
- The Chairman of Governors will pass the appeal submissions of both parties to the Governance Committee of the Governing Body, from whose number an Appeals Panel will be drawn.
- No one on the Appeals Panel will have been actively involved in the case, though they may have been informed of the case in general terms.
- In the case of a parental complaint, one member of the Appeals Panel must be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The Chairman of the Appeals Panel will decide upon the form of the appeal. This will usually be by review of the written evidence and findings, though he/she may request personal representation by both parties.
- 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 the parties are not to be present in person, an Appeals Panel will include at least two Governors and the independent person.
- Notification of the date of the appeal will normally be sent out within 15 working days of receipt of the documentation from both parties and the case will normally be dealt with within a further 5 working days, though availability of sufficient members of the Appeals Panel who are not conversant with the case may mean that this is not possible. This must be respected by both parties.
- Both parties will be informed of the nature, date and personnel dealing with the appeal.
- If possible, the Appeals Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- Further complaints or documentation not already submitted cannot be produced at the complaints appeal.
- After considering all the facts, the Appeals Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The appeal decision, and the reasons for it, should be confirmed to the parties concerned including the person complained of (where relevant), the Chairman of Governors and the Head, in writing within 15 working days of the deliberations by the Panel.
- If the complaint is upheld by the appeals procedure, the Head will have a right of appeal and the procedures outlined above will be repeated.
- Only one appeal is allowed by each party and the Chairman of the Appeals Panel's decision is final.

Copies of Complaints

- The school is to keep a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received, noting at what stage in the process they were resolved.

- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The school is to ensure that correspondence, statements and records relating to the individual complaints are to be kept confidential except to the extent required 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.
- The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be made available to the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection.
- Written complaints relating to the requirements under the statutory framework for the EYFS: The Abbey 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.
- A record of complaints, including the Early Years Centre, will be kept for a period of at least three years.

All aspects of this policy and the procedure will be reviewed regularly and all statements in publications, handbooks etc. should be updated as appropriate.

A copy of this policy is made available to parents and prospective parents via the school website and from the school office during the school day. The Abbey School will ensure that parents of pupils are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. Parents of prospective pupils who request it may also be given this information.

It should be noted that although this procedure assumes that any complaint will be made by a parent or guardian, it is possible that a complaint may be made by a pupil. For any complaint, this procedure will be invoked.

There was one complaint during the academic year 2016-2017 and has been resolved satisfactorily.

Authorised by	Resolution of the Governing Council
Date	September 2017

Effective date of the policy	September 2017
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