

**Complaints Policy**

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**Date for revision: September 2016**

**Responsibility: Finance & HR Committee**

**Approved by full Governing Body: September 2014**

**Date approved: Under Review**

**Date for revision: September 2023**

**Responsibility: Trustee Board**

**Approved by full Governing Body: September 2014**

**AVAILABILITY OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

This policy and procedure is available on request to pupils, the parents/carers of pupils and prospective pupils of Haybrook College Trust. While pupils may themselves raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the Trust will involve parents/carers should this occur. Copies are available from:

**Suzanne Green**

**Governance Professiona;**

**Haybrook College Trust**

**112 Burnham Lane**

**Slough**

**Berks SL1 6LZ**

A copy of our complaints procedure is also available on the Trust’s website.

**COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents/carers of pupils, at Haybrook College Trust. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents/carers and pupils made against the Trust except in respect of;

(a) **child protection allegations** where a separate procedure applies; and

(b) **exclusions** where a separate policy and procedure applies;

(c) **appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications** where a separate appeals procedure applies.

The Trust expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use their best endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to exclude a pupil, must be given verbally or in writing to the Executive Headteacher of the relevant school and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response. Please refer to the following guidelines for the specific timescales. We will do all we can to resolve your concern and to ensure you are happy with the education that your child receives in Haybrook College Trust. Parents/carers can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except in so far as is required by paragraph 32(3)(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school’s inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Our Complaints Procedure will:

* encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
* be easily accessible and publicised
* be simple to understand and use
* be impartial
* be non-adversarial
* allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
* ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
* respect people’s desire for confidentiality
* address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
* provide information to the Trust’s senior management team so that services can be improved.

The Trust will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

**STAGE ONE - INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents/carers have a complaint they should normally contact their child’s Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents/carers’ satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Centre Manager.
3. Complaints made directly to the Executive Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant ClassTeacher unless the Executive Headteacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Class Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. (See Annex A) These records will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the Trust.
5. The Trust will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten (10) working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in Trust holidays or within two (2) working days of their commencement, where the Trust will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new term (usually within ten (10) working days).
6. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the Class Teacher and the parents/carers fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents/carers will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

**STAGE TWO - FORMAL RESOLUTION**

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above), then parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. Parents/carers should also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.
2. The Executive Headteacher will delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to a member of senior staff where appropriate, or will deal with the matter personally.
3. The Executive Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
4. In most cases, the Executive Headteacher will meet or speak with the parents/carers concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
5. The Executive Headteacher will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents/carers within ten (10) working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in Trust holidays or within two (2) working days of their commencement, where the Executive Headteacher will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents/carers as soon as possible after the commencement of the new term (usually within ten (10) working days).
6. It may be necessary for a member of senior staff, to carry out further investigations.
7. The Executive Headteacher will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
8. Once the Executive Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten (10) working days after speaking or meeting with parents/carers to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 10 above). The Executive Headteacher may also arrange to meet with parents/carers to explain the decision.
9. The Trust will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the Trust’s decision, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the Trust. This record will state if complaints were resolved at the preliminary hearing or if they were taken to appeal.
10. Where parents/carers are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Trust’s response to their formal complaint, the parents/carers have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by an independent Complaints Panel. (Please see stage 3 for further details.)

**STAGE THREE – PANEL HEARING**

1. If parents/carers seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Executive Headteacher’s decision in respect of their formal complaint, the parents/carers may, in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors, request that their complaint be further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.
2. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an ‘appeal’.
3. Parents/carers must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten (10) working days of the date of the Trust’s decision made in accordance with the Stage Two Procedure. The parents/carers should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against the Trust and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.
4. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this ‘initial submission’ although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
5. Where an appeal is received by Chair of Governors, he/she will refer it without delay to the Trust. The Trust will, within five (5) working days, refer the matter to the Clerk to the Board of Directors who will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by the Trust during Trust holidays, or within two (2) working days of their commencement, the Trust has five (5) working days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.
6. The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.
7. Once an appeal has been received by the Clerk, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five (5) working days, and inform the parents/carers of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.
8. The Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty (20) school days after receipt by the Trust of parents/carers’ written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
9. The independent Complaints Panel will consist of the relevant school Chair of Governors, a member of the Board who has not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the school. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to any relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE)

10. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and

address the Panel:

(a) The parent/s) and/or one representative;

(b) The Executive Headteacher and/or one representative; and

(c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

1. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:

(a) documents in support of complaint(s),

(b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and

(c) written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents/carers.

1. Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than ten (10) working days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five (5) working days in advance of the Panel hearing.
2. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents/carers’ complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
3. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten (10) working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final.
4. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the Trust will need the appropriate approval from the relevant authorities e.g. the Board of Directors, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
5. The Panel’s findings will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents/carers, the Executive Headteacher, the school Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.

1. The Trust will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the Trust.

# Complaint form – (Appendix 1)



**Please complete and return to the Headteacher in the first instance, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

|  |
| --- |
| Your name: |
| Pupil’s name: |
| Your relationship to the pupil: |
| Address: |
| Postcode:  |
| Daytime telephone number: |
| Evening telephone number: |
| Please give details of your complaint: |
| What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response)? |
| What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? |
| Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details. |
| Signature: | Date: |
| Official use: |
| Date acknowledgement sent: |
| By whom: |
| Complaint referred to: |
| Date: |
| (Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of the Executive Headteacher’s investigation, you will be asked to submit a revised copy of this form to the Chair of the Trustee Board).  |

**Haybrook College Trust**

**Complaints Flowchart Summary of Dealing with Complaints**

Stage 3

**Complaint appeal received**

Clerk issues letter to parents/carers within 5 working days

Appeal meeting convened within 20 working days of receipt

Evidence distribution to all 5 working days before meeting

Stage 2

**Issue Resolved**

No further action required

Stage 2

**Issue Resolved**

Appeal lodged within 10 working days of receipt of decision

Stage 1

**Issue Not Resolved**

Reported to Executive Headteacher in writing

Stage 1

**Issue Resolved**

No further action required

Stage 2

**Complaint received by Executive Headteacher**

Acknowledge receipt of complaint and hold meeting (if necessary) within 10 working days

Letter with decision sent within 10 working days

Stage 1

Complaint received by staff member

To be resolved within 10 working days