

Complaints Policy

Tring Park School recognises that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. This document is intended to describe the procedures the school has in place for dealing with these complaints and tries to make the process both transparent and fair. The school would like to reassure you that it will take seriously your concerns.

Complaints may be made in person, on the telephone or in writing, either by letter, email or fax. The school will respond with an acknowledgment of the complaint within 24 hours during term time. The complaint will be responded to appropriately and you should expect an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the event, information about the steps we have taken and details of the actions we have taken. This will include an apology if we have made a mistake.

The school will keep a confidential record of your complaint which will include details of the date, the person(s) concerned, who dealt with the complaint, and when and how it was resolved. This written record will identify those complaints relating to boarding provision, and any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. All 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

Parents and pupils can feel that making a complaint may have negative outcomes for the pupil. Please be assured that the school will continue to treat all pupils with the respect and dignity due to any pupil, regardless of any complaints procedure. Furthermore, please do not be concerned that the school might see your issue as unimportant. If it is important to you or your child, then it is important to us.

Procedures

In line with Independent Schools Standards Regulations (ISSRs) and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools standard 18, the school operates a three stage process for complaints.

Stage One: Informal

Complaints will vary in nature and severity and it is the school's aim to try to resolve any complaint informally in the first instance. It is intended that there is a hierarchy of responses to a specific complaint. In the first instance, it may be the individual teacher, houseparent or tutor who is able to deal with the problem. If the complaint is of a more serious nature, it may be made to a Department Director. If you wish to make a complaint following an incident or issue we would ask that you do so as soon as possible and ideally within seven days. Your complaint will be acknowledged within two

working days during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

Following an investigation from the School you will receive a response within ten working days (or within the alternative timescale notified to parents separately) during term time. A response may not be a resolution of the problem at that time, particularly if an investigation requires longer. However, you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint.

When a complaint is made, the member of staff whom you have contacted will make a written record of the problem, and any actions taken including any evidence gathered. This record will also record whether the complaint is resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeds to the next stage or stages.

If you feel that your problem has not been resolved at this level, we will move to stage 2.

Stage Two: Formal

Stage two is a Formal procedure by which you should put your complaint in writing to the Principal ideally within seven days of the end of the stage one process. Again, the school will acknowledge this within two working days during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale. .

As stage one included the member of staff whom you contacted making a written record of the problem, and any actions taken including any evidence gathered the Principal will review all of this information and gather more detail/evidence if needed. The Principal will respond to your complaint within ten working days during term time. The log will record whether the complaint is resolved at this stage or proceeds to a panel hearing.

Stage Three: Panel

If you are not satisfied with the Principal's response to your complaint at stage two and you indicate a wish to continue to stage three, you may take the concern to the Chair of the Governing Body in writing and a panel hearing will take place. Ideally this should be done within seven days of the end of the stage two process.

This contact will be acknowledged within two working days during term time.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for a panel of at least two members of the Governing body and one person independent of the management and running of the school to consider the complaint. No member of the panel may have any involvement with any matter detailed in the complaint. The Chair should set up this panel within ten working days during term time.

At the panel hearing, the complainant may attend and may be accompanied by one other person: a relative or friend. However, legal representation requires permission and can only be permitted if the Chair of Governors thinks it appropriate. If legal representation is granted, then the complainant must inform the Chair of Governors at least seven days before the hearing. The Chair of Governors will notify other parties of this legal representation, to allow all parties involved to be legally represented.

If you decide not to attend the panel hearing, it will proceed in your absence to consider your complaint and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.

Where possible, the panel will resolve the problem at the hearing. Where further investigation is required, the panel will reach a decision and make its recommendations known in writing within 14 working days of the hearing, or as soon as is practicable. The written decision will be sent to the complainant, the person complained about where relevant, and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Principal. The written decision will be held with the Complaints Log by the Principal. This panel decision will be final. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

In line with the Independent School Standards Regulations, Part 7 J (ii), we will keep a record of action taken by the school in relation to complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. In line with DfE guidance, the School will retain records which do not have safeguarding implications for a minimum of seven years. Any records concerning allegations of abuse will be retained for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Allegations and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

This policy has been written with regard to Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and Independent Schools Standards Regulations (ISSRs) The Complaints Policy applies to all pupils whether day or boarding. The policy is available on the school's website, in the school's Parent-Pupil Handbook or by request from the School Office. Contact details of relevant people named in this policy are listed below.

Findings and Recommendations

Following the outcome of a panel hearing the findings and recommendations will be made available to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Principal.

Outside term time

During school holidays it will not usually be possible to acknowledge and follow-up on a complaint in the same timescales as during term time because of staff holiday absence from school. We would still normally aim to acknowledge the complaint within

a week. The period of investigation and response would depend on staff availability and the school would advise parents if this period would be longer than outlined in the term time guidelines. In any event the school would aim to resolve the complaint within four weeks.

N.B. During the period of the pandemic it may take longer to acknowledge and deal with a complaint as a consequence of disruption or staff absence. If we anticipate any delay we would try to contact the parents as soon as we can. Please be assured that we would still aim to resolve any complaint as quickly as possible.

Contacts

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Chair of Governors
Mrs Angela Odell
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Local Authority District Officer for Hertfordshire:
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Children's Services, Customer Services Centre
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Child Protection Schools Liaison Officer for Dacorum:
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