

Tring Park School for the Performing Arts

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Tring Park 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 Complaints Procedure. Tring Park 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 Tring Park 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 of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Tring Park School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. It may also be used by pupils who are current boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Principal to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under the Behaviour Policy in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates.

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, 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. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to 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.

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 or concern they can contact either by 'phone, email or letter to their child's individual teacher, form tutor or houseparent. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a more senior member of staff, for example a head of department or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- Complaints made directly to a head of department or a member of the SLT, will usually be referred to the relevant teacher or houseparent unless it is deemed appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The person receiving the initial complaint 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 5 working days** or in the event that the member of staff 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 Complaints Procedure.
- In some cases, the Principal retains the right to automatically escalate a complaint to Stage 2.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, currently Mrs Angela Odell, who can be contacted by email at Chair@tringpark.com

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 Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will wish to either meet or speak to the parents concerned, **within 5 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Principal will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

- If the complaint is against the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee 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 of Governors or their nominee 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 of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk of Governors within 5 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the clerk of governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.
- The Clerk of Governors is the School's Business Director Stephen Robinson and he can be emailed at Stephen.Robinson@tringpark.com
- If the complaint is about the Business Director, parents should write to the Chair of Governors at Chair@tringpark.com
- **The name of the convenor of the Panel, appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal 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 convenor will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel **OR** The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 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 or further investigation be carried out. 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.** In the event that the complaint is about the Principal, they shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. Accompanying adults may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

- 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:**
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - 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 Principal. 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 Principal.
- Any complaint about a decision taken by the Principal to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School's Behaviour Policy will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Principal to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Principal, that the Principal's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Principal to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

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 25 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 30 working days**.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure. In addition, once a complaint has been raised, parents are asked not to write to additional members of staff or to persist for an answer in haste, and to allow the process to run its course.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal Stage 2 complaints, or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice <https://www.tringpark.com/privacy-policy/>

When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's *Data Protection Policy*, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's *Data Protection Policy* available on the School's web site.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Data Protection Policy*. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg. in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

For the academic year 2022-2023, the School received a total of 0 formal complaints

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

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