

COMPLAINTS POLICY: DEALING WITH PARENTAL CONCERNS Whole School

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The school welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and aims to deal properly with any concerns that parents may raise. If, as parents, there are concerns, we would much rather hear them as soon as possible. If in doubt, you should contact the school, as we are here to help. We aim to respond within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way in accordance with this Policy.
- 1.2 The school will keep a written record of any complaints and their outcome. The school will investigate written complaints and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation as soon as practicable.
- 1.3 It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. It is normally best to start with the member of staff most closely connected with the issue. A list of staff with contact details is given at the end of this Policy.
- 1.4 References to written communication include e-mail but do not include any other form of electronic communication (social media, text messages, etc).

2. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 2.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 2.2 If parents have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact their child's form tutor (Senior School), class teacher (Prep School) or housemistress (boarders). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form tutor, class teacher or housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to refer the matter to a senior member of staff.
- 2.3 Complaints made directly to a senior member of staff including the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form tutor, class teacher or

housemistress, unless it is deemed appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

- 2.4 In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' and school's satisfaction.
- 2.5 The person dealing with the matter must keep a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date(s) on which they were received. He/she must also inform a member of the Executive Team of the nature and outcome of the complaint.
- 2.6 Should the matter not be resolved within, usually 5 working days, or in the event that the relevant 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 Procedure.

3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 3.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, and request that the matter be considered further. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint the appropriate course of action.
- 3.2 In most cases, the Head or Deputy Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint (or longer if during the school holidays) to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The Head or Deputy Head will keep a written record of this meeting.
- 3.3 If it is not possible to resolve the matter during this meeting or if the matter is considered significantly serious or complex then it may be necessary for the Head or Deputy Head to carry out further investigations. The investigation will normally be conducted by a member of the Executive who has not previously been involved in the matter.
- 3.4 The investigation should be conducted in a timely manner but with a thoroughness appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint. The person conducting the complaint shall keep written records of all meetings and interviews in relation to the complaint.
- 3.5 Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as 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 Head will also give reasons for the decision.

- 3.6 The school will keep a written record of the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not).

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, then they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure, within 20 working days. During the period of the pandemic, the school reserves the right to extend the time periods set out in Stages 1 to 3 above, to provide additional flexibility that may be needed as a consequence of disruption or staff absence.

4. Stage 3 – Panel (Appeal) Hearing

- 4.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of the Appeals Committee, who has been appointed by the Governors to arrange all hearings of the School's Appeals Panel.
- 4.2 The matter will then be referred to the Appeals Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Kent College has nominated the Head of Farringtons School to be the independent person who sits on the Appeal Panel. In the event that the Head is unable to be in attendance, the Bursar of Farringtons School will take the place of the Head. The Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days.
- 4.3 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 no later than 5 days prior to the hearing.
- 4.4 The parents are invited to attend the Panel Hearing and maybe accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 4.5 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 4.6 Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. The hearing may be adjourned to allow this to be done. The Panel will decide what steps should be taken and will determine a new date for the adjourned hearing.

4.7 After due consideration of all the facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within usually 7 days of the Hearing.

4.8 The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant the person complained about. The Panel's findings and recommendations will then be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Heads.

4.9 The decision of the Panel will be final.

4.10

5. Confidentiality

5.1 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record will be kept on file of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to panel hearing.

5.2 Correspondence, statements and records relating to the individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them,), where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

6. Boarders

6.1 Pupils in the boarding community have a separate means of registering a complaint, which they may use in addition to or instead of the complaint process described in this policy. Pupils wishing to make a complaint may use the Boarding House Complaints Procedure. This is available from House Staff in confidence, or from the boarders' handbook, a copy of which is kept in the house common room.

6.2 A separate record of complaints from Boarders' parents is kept centrally.

7. Record Keeping

7.1 All informal complaints must be referred to the Executive at the time of resolution. The Executive is responsible for monitoring the frequency and nature of informal complaints and taking appropriate action should underlying patterns emerge.

7.2 All complaints dealt with under the formal procedure set out at Stage 2, will be recorded by the Head in a Central Confidential Register of Complaints maintained by the Heads. The register will include relevant details of the complaint including the date when the complaint was made, the date and the manner in which it was resolved, whether it proceeded to a panel hearing, the investigation/panel findings and recommendations, and the action taken by the school.

7.3 The confidential register will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Head and Chair of Governors and will be inspected periodically by the Chair of Governors.

8. **At the Senior School:**

Most issues are best aired first with your child's form tutor, Student Manager or Head of School. You may contact them through the main school office (Tel. 01892 822006) or via their e-mail:

Student Manager (Lower School year 7-9) Mrs C Johnson
johnsonc@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Head of Sixth form and Middle School (year 10-11) Mrs W Young Min
youngminw@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Or, for boarders, your daughter's housemistress:

Housemistress of Hawkwell & Hargreaves Miss S Saunders
saunderss@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Housemistress of James & Osborn Mrs G Cable
cableg@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

Alternatively you may wish to talk to one of the following:

- **Deputy Head (academic)** Mr J Mossman
mossmanj@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
(who could put you in touch with Heads of Department when appropriate)
- **Deputy Head (pastoral)** Mrs G Sullivan
sullivang@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

- **for medical matters:**
School nurse
barwickv@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Mrs V Barwick
- **for financial matters:**
Bursar
bursar@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk
Mrs A Jenkins

You can, of course, go directly to the Headmistress especially if the matter is sensitive. You should also speak to the Headmistress if you are not satisfied that your concerns have been fully or fairly considered after speaking to another member of staff.

headmistress@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk Ms J Lodrick

If you wish to contact the Chair of Governors directly this can be done by writing to Mr John Ingram c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the school address, or alternatively by email

ingramj@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

9. At the Preparatory School:

We value our relationships with you as parents and it is important that we work together in your child's best interests. I hope that the details listed below will assist you in directing your concern to the appropriate member of staff.

Most concerns are best discussed first with your child's class teacher.

If you have any queries about the Foundation Stage curriculum then please contact:

Head of EYS/KS1
Mrs R Cole
coler@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you have a query about reporting and assessment, teaching and learning and any pastoral concern that cannot be resolved by discussion with your daughter's class teacher then please direct your concerns to:

Head of Prep School Mrs S Hall
halls@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you feel it is not appropriate to discuss your concern with any of the above staff then you should contact Ms Julie Lodrick, Headmistress. Telephone 01892 822006 or email headmistress@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk

If you wish to contact the Chair of Governors directly this can be done by writing to Mr John Ingram c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the school address, or alternatively by email ingramj@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk.

10. Complaints made directly to MIST

10.1 Except in exceptional circumstances all parental (and other complaints) will be dealt with by the school following procedures outlined above. The decision of the school's Appeals Panel will be final.

10.2 Exceptional circumstances would include:

- A complainant can show that a MIST school has not followed the agreed and reasonable procedures; or
- Where it has been agreed between the school and the complainant that mediation from MIST could be helpful in resolving the complaint; or where
- A potential claim may have a material impact on MIST as well as the School.

10.3 In the first instance, parents (or others) who consider they have reason to take their complaint directly to MIST should do so by contacting the General Secretary of MIST.

11. Complaints made directly to the Church

11.1 The Methodist Conference has delegated responsibility for the oversight of its schools to the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST). Thus, any person making a complaint about the schools or the Trust must be referred by the Church to MIST. Any letter of complaint with any accompanying documentation must be forwarded to the General Secretary of MIST, or if the complaint is about the General Secretary, to the Chair of MIST. The General Secretary and/or the Chair of MIST will put in hand the agreed procedures of the Trust to investigate the complaint and to respond to it. The outcome of the process will be reported to the Trustees and the Secretary of Conference.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of how your complaint has been dealt with, you can refer the matter to:

ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate), Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Telephone: 020 7600 0100

www.isi.net

For matters relating to for Early Years Foundation Stage:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231.

Reviewed Nov 2008 in line with Farrer & Co's guidance

Amended and agreed by SLT: May 2015

Approved by Governors: November 2015

Contacts amended: August 2016

Updated September 2017 in line with MIST guidance

Approved by Governors: November 2017

Updated September 2018 in line with MIST guidance

Approved by Governors September 2018

Updated March 2019

Approved by Governors: March 2019

Approved by Governors: September 2019

Approved by Governors: September 2020

Reviewed annually

The number of complaints for the last academic year is available on request from the Headmistress' PA, Mrs A Masters (mastersa@kentcollege.kent.sch.uk)