

Sibford School - Boarding House Complaints Policy

Introduction

We believe that the boarding house provides a caring and positive environment for all our children, and that the Houseparents, the Head of Boarding/Deputy Head and the Head work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

If any parent is unhappy with the care that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the Houseparent, Tutor or the Head of Boarding immediately.

Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases; we put the interests of the child first. We try to provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be discussed, and then resolved at an early stage.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response. The boarding house will endeavour to deal with complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, and where appropriate, will take action. It is the school's policy that complaints should not rebound on the children. Pupils themselves are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Parents are informed of the complaints process and the number of Ofsted, which they may wish to contact with their complaint:

OFSTED
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404040

The complaints process

Stage One: Informal resolution

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the care that we are providing in the house, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the houseparents. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All of the house staff work hard to ensure that each boarder is happy at in the house and sees boarding as a positive experience; they want to know early on if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's well being.

Complaints about boarding made directly to the Head of Boarding will usually be referred to the Houseparents, unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. If a House Parent feels that they cannot deal with the problem alone, they will confer with the other Houseparents, the Head of Boarding/Deputy Head or the Headmaster, as appropriate.

Those parents who make an informal complaint straight to the Head by email will be dealt with either by the Head or by the member of staff he delegates to act for him, but the matter is usually resolved at this stage.

The Houseparent (or other senior member of staff) will make a written note (dated) of any parental concerns or complaints.

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the Houseparents, or the Houseparent and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, or if their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage two of this procedure.

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 Head who will arrange for them to make an appointment to discuss the matter. The Head considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for his decision. Normally no complaint dealt with at any level below the Governing Body should remain unresolved for longer than five working days. When resolution will take longer than this, the parent will be kept informed.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should progress to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Should a parent have a complaint about the Head, s/he should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the governing body (School Committee), who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint involving a panel hearing, as outlined below.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

If an informal complaint and subsequent discussions have failed to resolve an issue, then a formal complaint should be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and the actions of the school so far. This written complaint should be sent to the Chairman of Governors, who will convene a complaints panel.

The complaints panel, represented by no fewer than two governors (neither of whom is involved in the matter under investigation) and one other person independent of the management and running of the school, must consider all written complaints within a maximum of three weeks. A meeting will be arranged to discuss the complaint; the panel will give the parents at least three days' notice of the meeting, allowing for parents to attend the meeting and be accompanied at the meeting, if they so wish.

After hearing all the evidence, including that gathered through further investigation, should it be necessary, the panel will consider their findings and will reach a decision. They may make recommendations. This process will be completed within **7 days** of the hearing. The Panel's findings, their reasons and any recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. The Governing body does all it can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

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

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

In addition to the procedures above:

This policy is available to all staff and boarders

- Boarders and their parents are informed how to contact Ofsted regarding boarding welfare and this information is displayed prominently around the school.
- Ofsted number 08456 404040
- Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith
- All written records of complaints are reviewed annually by both the Head and the chairman of Governors.
- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.
- ISI can also be contacted 020 7600 0100

Appendix: Complaints Procedure - Independent Member of the Panel

The DfES has supplied the following guidance in a letter to the ISC General Secretary:

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background - perhaps retired members of the Police Force - might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

At all stages, a written record is to be kept by the school of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing. All 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 163 of the 2002 Education Act requests access to them.