

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(for parents of pupils)

This procedure has been created to meet the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 and as subsequently amended in 2010 to include specific reference to schools with an Early Years Foundation Stage; the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools published under section 87C of the Children Act 1989 and subsequently amended in 2009, 2011 and 2013, and with reference to the ISI Regulatory Framework January 2017.

Beechwood Sacred Heart School prides itself on the quality of its teaching and the level of pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint, however, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. This procedure applies to all sections of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Preparatory School and the Senior School.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them. The school will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Conflict of Interests

Should a parent or individual wish to make a complaint-formal or informal-about a member of staff or a pupil, and a conflict of interest exists then the member of staff or governor who has the potential conflict of interest (the 'conflicted party') cannot be involved in the complaints procedure. In addition, no information regarding the complaint or its progress can be disclosed to the conflicted party.

A conflict of interest can arise in a number of ways, including the following by way of example:

- (i) the individual making the complaint is also a member of staff or governor
- (ii) the individual making the complaint is related to or has a close personal relationship with a member of staff or governor
- (iii) the subject of the complaint is related to or has a close personal relationship with a member of staff or governor

In the examples above, that member of staff or governor is the conflicted party. If the conflicted party would normally be part of the complaints proceedings, then their place in the process will be taken by another member of staff nominated by the Head. If the conflicted party is the Head the complaint will be dealt with by the Deputy in conjunction with a governor, nominated by the Chair of Governors.

This policy will be made available to parents on the school's website; a copy is available for inspection at school during the school day and parents are informed in the parents' handbook of how to view the policy. The school will keep a record of all complaints received during each academic year and this record will be retained for at least three years. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year will be made available to parents and prospective parents on request.

Informal resolution

It is anticipated that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

When parents do have a complaint or concern, they should normally first contact their daughter/son's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved to the parents' satisfaction straight away by this means. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult a Head of Department, Head of Division, Head of Prep, Deputy Head or Headmaster, as appropriate.

Complaints made directly to a more senior member of staff will normally be referred to the Form Tutor, unless it is deemed inappropriate to do so.

A member of staff receiving a complaint will make a written record of the complaint, recording the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within one month, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with formal resolution procedure below.

Formal resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint **in writing** to the Headmaster.

If the written complaint is received during term-time, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter, within 7 days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the written complaint is received in the school holidays, a revised time-scale may apply.

It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he will make a decision and parents will be informed of this decision, in writing, within 28 days of having received the complaint, although different time scales may apply in school holidays.

If parents are still not satisfied with this decision, they may proceed to request a panel hearing. Parents may also wish to contact the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, www.isi.net, or in the case of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted, www.ofsted.gov.uk, about their concerns.

Panel hearing

Following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, parents wishing to proceed to a panel hearing should write to the Chairman of Governors c/o Beechwood School, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3QD, giving details of their complaint and any subsequent action taken by the School. If the request for a panel hearing is received during term-time, the Chairman of Governors will acknowledge receipt within 7 days of receiving the request. If the written complaint is received in the school holidays, a revised time-scale may apply.

The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least two serving School Governors and, in addition, a suitable person who

is independent of the management or governance of the School. The Panel members, who should not have had any direct involvement with matters detailed in the complaint, will be appointed by the Chairman of Governors.

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 will be supplied to relevant parties not later than 3 days prior to the hearing. The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person, who may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not, however, normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint at the time of the hearing, 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 all facts they consider to be relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents, informing them of their decision and the reasons for it, within 28 days of the hearing, although different time scales may apply in school holidays.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint had been made.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

4. Complaints against the Headmaster

Any complaint against the Headmaster must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors c/o Chair of Governors c/o Beechwood School, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3QD. The Chair of Governors will reply to the complaint within seven working days. If the written complaint is received in the school holidays, a revised time-scale may apply.

5. Record keeping

In accordance with the ISI Regulatory Handbook January 2017 the school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints (written) and whether they are resolved at stage 2 or stage 3 of the procedure, and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS 18), the school will record if the complaint is related to the provision for boarding. In the 2016-17 academic year the School received one complaint.

October 2017 DHM
Date of review October 2018