

Complaints Procedure for Parents/Guardians – Whole School

Embleton View

Introduction

The existence of the policy is clearly identified in the information provided for parents of prospective students. Embleton View prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this Procedure. The complaints procedure should give clear timescales for each stage of the process, which include a firm indication of when it will be concluded. These should be realistic, and there is no set time scale, as long as it is reasonable. We include the proviso 'normally' to allow for holiday periods.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of students at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a student at the school, parents or guardians of a student at the school or several parents or guardians of students at the school. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students. Parents have a right to make a complaint to the Local Authority, and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Details of how this may be done are given at the end of this procedure.

A complaint may be made by parents, students or staff. The school also has a 'whistle blowing policy' that is detailed in the staff handbook.

Embleton View aims to be fair, open and honest by giving careful consideration to all complaints, dealing with them as swiftly as possible. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable time-frame. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation, but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. We aim to resolve any complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. Students will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We actively encourage strong home-school links and ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents. We also ensure that any person complained against has equal rights to the person making the complaint.

Where the person being complained about is named as the person who would be handling the complaint in these procedures, their role will be passed upwards to their line manager. For example, Learning and Development Coordinators (LDCs) to Headteacher.

How Should I Complain and to Whom?

Parents can email, write, telephone or talk directly to a member of staff. Please be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. Any member of staff will be happy to help. It is usually best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue as they are likely to be able to sort things out quickly. However, parents may prefer to take the matter to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will determine who is best positioned to handle the complaint and will redirect the complaint if necessary.

Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. The complaint will normally be resolved within twenty-eight days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case the parents will be kept informed. However, as far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the parents will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

The Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as the child's LDC. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for the member of staff to consult the Headteacher.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter 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 five 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 Procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five 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 Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for their decision. A note will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.
- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Headteacher, an approach should first be made to the Proprietor whose contact details are: Mr Graeme Turner, Graeme@aldgroup.co.uk; which is all year round. This should include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Proprietors, who are obliged to investigate the matter, will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), or due to the nature of the complaint, that they do not wish to follow Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure, they will be referred to a Complaints Panel, which will include a member of Embleton View's Advisory Board, along with the Proprietors.
- The Panel Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the Hearing.
- The complainant, who could be parents or guardians, may be accompanied to the Panel Hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five working days of the Hearing.
- A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant, the Headteacher, the Chair of Proprietors and, where relevant, the person complained about;
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietors and the Headteacher.
- The complainants will have the right of appeal to a higher authority, namely Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), whose contact details are given at the end of this policy.
- The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents.

The role of the Panel Chair is to:

- Confirm to all parties in writing the date, time and venue of the Hearing; to receive and distribute any documentation to be read before the Hearing; to meet and welcome all parties as they arrive at the Hearing;

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- Make a fair summary record of the proceedings, noting any specific details requested by the complainant or panel
- Notify all parties of the Panel's decision. The wording of any letters will be agreed with the Chair of the Panel.

The role of the Chair of the Panel is to ensure that:

- Appropriate procedure to allow a full and fair Hearing is properly followed;
- The procedure for the Hearing of the complaint is explained to all parties and that they have the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed; all parties are put at ease, especially those who are unfamiliar with such a Hearing;
- Proceedings are kept as informal as possible and that everyone treats each other with respect and courtesy;
- The Panel operates in an open-minded and independent way and time is given for all parties to consider 'new' evidence.

The Panel may decide upon one or more of the following actions:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not re-occur.

Confidentiality

Parents/carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints, are to be kept confidential except;

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting and inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails.

Record keeping for the Whole School

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel Hearing is kept by the Headteacher, for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Proprietors examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action, which was taken as a result of each complaint. Parents may contact the Headteacher to ask for the number of formal complaints made during the previous academic year.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the DSL who would consult with the Headteacher (See our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy for details of the procedure).

Complaints from External Bodies

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the school's expectations.

In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to Ofsted should they wish to, the relevant contact details are:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Helpline: 03001 123 123
Telephone: 03001 234 234 Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London. EC1A 9HA
Telephone: 0207 600 0100 Web: www.isi.net Email: info@isi.net

Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7, paragraph 33 (a) to (k) inclusive, The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations.

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Applies to:

- parents or guardians of students currently on role at the school
- parents or guardians who were previously on role at the school but where the complaint(s) was not made at that time
- the whole school including the out of school care and extra-curricular activities inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching and support staff), the proprietors and volunteers working in the school.

Timescale




- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.

Availability

- The Complaints Procedure is provided in the information for prospective students, parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.
- This procedure is also made available to parents, staff on the School website: <http://www.embletonview.co.uk/> and it is also made available to parents or guardians of students on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail: admin@aldgroup.co.uk

Monitoring and Review

- The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- The Proprietors monitor the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year and carry out a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure for the purposes of monitoring.
- This is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Proprietors of the School for the purposes of monitoring.

		
Graeme Turner (Proprietor)	Anna Turner (Proprietor)	Craig Bell (Proprietor)
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