



GATEHOUSE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

We believe that Gatehouse School provides a good education for all our children and that the Headmistress and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. In accordance with paragraph 33 of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 we are 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.

This policy is available for parents to download from the school's website or hard copies can be provided, on request, from the school office.

Scope

This policy is applicable to parents or legal guardians of pupils currently attending Gatehouse School. It may also, at the discretion of the Head, be used to deal with complaints from the parents of past pupils who have recently left the school.

Aims and objectives

- To ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible.
- To ensure the approach is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote confidence in the school's provision for safeguarding and promotion of welfare.
- To seek to resolve every concern or complaint quickly and to correct any matter which may have gone wrong.
- To learn from complaints, including reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

The complaints procedure

A three stage procedure exists for dealing with concerns and complaints. Most issues are resolved informally at Stage 1 and parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their child's class teacher or other relevant member of staff at the earliest opportunity. Parents should not feel there are barriers to expressing reasonable concerns.

In each stage of the procedure a timescale is quoted for handling the various stages. Wherever it is reasonable to do so, the school will do everything possible to ensure that these timescales are adhered to. However there may be occasions, such as during school holidays, where a particular member of staff is away from school for any reason or where other agencies are involved when timescales become extended. In such cases the parent will be kept informed of the progress being made.

If a complaint or concern is raised, at any stage, regarding a Safeguarding issue then this will immediately be passed to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Fiona Tighe) and it will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy a copy of which can be downloaded from the school's website at: <http://www.gatehouseschool.co.uk/about-us/school-policies/>

STAGE 1 - Informal Resolution

- Concerns or complaints can be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If the matter has been raised by email or letter then receipt will normally be acknowledged by the school within two working days.
- Matters relating to the education or general welfare of a pupil should normally, in the first instance, be referred to the child's class teacher. Class teachers can be contacted via the school office. Matters relating to finance or administration should be referred to the Bursar.
- On occasion complaints may be passed to a member of the school's Senior Leadership team to deal with but still resolved informally.
- The school will normally resolve all complaints or concerns and report back to parents within ten working days. In practice many issues are resolved within a much quicker time scale.

STAGE 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parent at Stage 1 then the parent should put the complaint, in writing either by letter or email, to the Headmistress. Receipt of the complaint will normally be acknowledged within two working days.
- In the event that the complaint is against the Headmistress then it should be sent to the Chair of Governors either by letter (care of the school) or by email to: chairman@gatehouseschool.co.uk. In such cases the procedures outlined below will be conducted by either the Chair of Governors or another Governor nominated by the Chair to conduct the investigation.
- In most cases the Headmistress will arrange to meet with complainants to discuss their concerns within five working days as part of the process of investigating the complaint.
- The Headmistress will investigate the matter thoroughly and speak to all other members of staff or individuals concerned as he deems to be appropriate. He will report his findings to the complainant, in writing, normally within 15 working days from the date of the complaint being received. If the matter is complex then this timescale may be extended by the Head by up to a further 10 working days and the complainant will be notified of this.

STAGE 3 - Review Panel Hearing

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 process or if the specified timescales have not been adhered to then the complaint may be put before a review panel which will be established by the Chair of Governors.

- A request for a Review Panel Hearing should be made in writing, addressed to the Chair of Governors either by letter (care of the school) or by email to: chair@gatehouseschool.co.uk. Such a request would normally be expected to be made within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome of the Stage 2 process or of the expiry date of the specified timescale if no response has been received. Requests for a panel hearing received after 10 working days will fall outside the scope of this policy but may still be accepted, at the discretion of the Chair of Governors, where there is justifiable reason for the delay.
- If a parent seeks to invoke Stage 3 the Chair will convene a panel comprising three persons who are not connected to the matter of the complaint and have had no prior involvement with the investigation of the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The date set for the hearing will normally be within 15 working days of the date the request is received by the Chair of Governors. At least 5 working days notice of the date of the hearing will be provided to the parent.
- The parent(s) may, if he/she/they wish(es), be accompanied at the hearing by a person of their choice. However, legal representation would not usually be considered appropriate.
- The panel has the scope to review the original complaint and the way it has been dealt with. New information which has not previously been brought to the school's attention would not normally be considered. The panel members will review all paperwork relating to the matter prior to the hearing and may, at its discretion conduct further investigation.
- The parent(s) will be notified in writing, within 5 working days of the hearing, of the panel's findings and of any recommendations made to the school. It should be noted that the panel's findings are not binding upon the school but serious consideration will be given to any recommendations made.

Written records

A written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with either Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be kept by the school. This record will include:

- whether the complaint was resolved following the Stage 2 formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing; and
- what action has been taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

During the academic year 2018-19 the school dealt with one formal stage complaint which progressed to and was concluded at Stage 3.

The number of complaints dealt with at Stage 2 or Stage 3 during the current academic year will be disclosed to parents on request. Please contact the School Office if you would like to be given this information.

Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State for Education or a body conducting an inspection under sections 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Parents are asked to respect the confidentiality of these processes especially in respect of naming other children or information which could lead to the identification of other pupils

Monitoring and review

The school's Senior Leadership Team will monitor and review concerns and complaints raised under Stage 1 on a regular basis.

Formal complaints raised under Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be reported on a termly basis to the governing body for review.

Additionally, the Chair of Governors and Headmistress monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headmistress logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. They examine this log on an annual basis.

This policy is approved by the governing body and reviewed by them on an annual basis.

Other policies

From time to time issues raised under this policy may invoke procedures which are covered in other school policies, in particular the Anti Bullying Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. Both these policies can be downloaded from the school's website at: <http://www.gatehouseschool.co.uk/about-us/school-policies/>.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Notwithstanding the above procedures parents and/or carers have the right to raise complaints relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) with:

the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net.)

or

OfSTED (OfSTED may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Policy Name	Complaints	Last Review Date	February 2015 updated May 2017 updated Sep 2018
Status	Mandatory ISI Handbook part 7, ISSR para 33	Governors Review	June 2019
		Next Review	June 2020
Circulation	Governors / all staff / [volunteers] automatically. Parents on request. Website.		