



Complaints Procedure

2011-12

This policy applies to Early Years Foundation Stage, Junior School and Senior School.

Hollygirt School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and the concerns they raise. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or a perceived problem. Anonymous complaints cannot normally be pursued, although allegations of child abuse will be dealt with in line with Child Protection procedures. So far as is possible, the school will try to bring about a satisfactory outcome to any complaints.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 162A of the 2002 Act, requests access to them.

Procedure

- 1) If a parent has a complaint, this should first be discussed on an informal basis with the member of staff most closely concerned with the issue. For example, issues in form life with the Form Tutor, sports concerns with the Head of PE. Most difficulties could be expected to be sorted out quickly by the member of staff concerned, perhaps after consulting colleagues. Parents should be given a date by which they can expect to hear something, normally within five working days, and this should be adhered to, even if there is nothing to report by then. If the parent is not satisfied with the response, or the problem is of a more serious nature, an approach should be made to the Head of Juniors, the Deputy Head or the Headmistress.
- 2) Complaints of a minor nature will be recorded on the school database by the member of staff who speaks to the parent. Where a complaint warrants investigation by the Headmistress, it will be documented confidentially in the Headmistress's Complaints File.
- 3) Most complaints will be resolved at this stage, but there will be a minority of cases where, after discussion with the Headmistress, the parent is still seeking redress. Such complaints should be referred to the Chairman of the Trustees, **in writing**.
- 4) In other cases where the parents wish to complain directly about actions by the Headmistress, an approach should be made to the Mr R Heason, Chairman of the Trustees, who can be contacted by letters addressed '*Confidential*' and posted via the school.
- 5) In either of the above situations, the Chairman of the Trustees should approach the Headmistress to obtain a report and any relevant documentation, so that the complaint can be considered and, hopefully, resolved.
- 6) The Chairman may wish to see individual members of staff, the Headmistress, and the parents. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage, but parties may be invited to bring a supportive friend and should be kept fully informed by specified dates. The Chairman of the Trustees may be able to offer a new approach to the matter, and this may satisfy the parents.
- 7) If this is not possible and the parents still wish to take the matter further, it should be referred to the school's Conciliation Committee (See *Composition of Conciliation Committee*, and *Procedure at Conciliation Committee*). The parents should again be invited to bring a supportive friend, as for the meeting with the Chairman of the Trustees.
- 8) It is expected that most formal complaints will be resolved within a period of 28 working days.

- 9) At the end of the Conciliation Committee's deliberations, the Convenor should make a full report to the Chairman of the Trustees and inform the parents what is being done. The Chairman of the Trustees would be expected to endorse the Conciliation Committee's decision.
- 10) A written record will be kept of all complaints of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to the Conciliation Committee.
- 11) If the parents remain dissatisfied, despite the best efforts of the school, there is no further body to whom appeal may be made. They can choose to consult a lawyer.

Composition of the Conciliation Committee

The Conciliation Committee is appointed by the Trustees and is made up of:

- The Convenor, who is a Trustee other than the Chairman.
 - A specified number of members, up to four, of whom at least two are Trustees.
 - One person will be independent of the management and running of the school.
- Four members, including the Convenor, constitute a quorum for an individual case.

Members are committed to keeping the proceedings of the Committee confidential and to operating in a fair and objective manner - their aim is to conciliate.

In accepting appointment, members accept that they may never be called upon to meet.

Procedure at the Conciliation Committee

- 1) Those involved in the meeting include:
 - Up to five committee members, including the Convenor
 - The Headmistress, and, if necessary, a key member of staff
 - The parents, who are invited to bring a supportive friend, as at the meeting with the Chairman of the Trustees
- 2) A sufficient amount of time is committed to the meeting, in case it is needed.
- 3) The parents and the Headmistress are asked in advance whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceedings confidential. The papers are to be copied and distributed before the meeting.
- 4) The Convenor emphasises that he or she is concerned to reach a positive conclusion and invites first the parents and then the Headmistress to speak. After this the Convenor encourages questions and general discussions.
- 5) The Convenor may find it helpful at some point to invite the Headmistress (and member of staff if any), the parents and their friend to withdraw for a time from the discussion, leaving the committee alone.
- 6) If more time is required, it may be necessary to convene a second meeting. If so, the Committee members must commit themselves to attend, as continuity is essential.
- 7) The Conciliation Committee makes findings and recommendations and stipulates that the complainant, the Headmistress, the Chair of Trustees and where relevant the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendation as soon as possible. If a positive solution is reached, the Convenor should summarise the outcome and confirm the nature of the agreement before the meeting disperses.
- 8) At the end of the Committee's deliberations, the Convenor makes a full report to the Chairman of the Trustees and informs the parents that this is being done. The Chairman would be expected to endorse the Committee's decision.

Registered Complaints

Complaints registered under the formal procedure (i.e. have communicated with the Chair of the Trustees) in the academic year 2009-10 is three. All were resolved in the preliminary stages.

Unchanged August 2011