

UPPINGHAM

Complaints Procedure

1 Introduction

Uppingham School aims to provide the highest standards and quality of the teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

Uppingham makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and Uppingham will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents – it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

2 What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

3 The three-stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact the appropriate Deputy or Assistant Head. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. Relevant Deputy/Assistant Heads are as follows:

Academic matters:	Deputy Head Academic
Pastoral matters:	Senior Deputy Head
Co-curricular matters:	Assistant Head: Co-curricular
Sixth form matters:	Assistant Head: Sixth Form
- The Deputy or Assistant Head will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days or in the event that the Deputy or Assistant Head 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 Complaints Procedure.
- A Deputy or Assistant Head may ask the advice of Housemasters/mistresses, Head of Department or whomsoever else depending on the nature of the complaint as part of their attempt to resolve the problem at an informal level.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Trustees.

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- A complaint about a matter relating to fees or extras should be stated in writing to the Bursar.

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 Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster or the Senior Deputy Head will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, within seven 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 Headmaster to instruct further investigations. The Headmaster will usually ask a senior member of staff to investigate the complaint. The outcome of any investigation will be reported to the Headmaster who will use the information to inform his decision.
- The Headmaster, or any senior member of staff to whom the investigation has been delegated, will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the School 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, within fourteen working days of the Headmaster receiving the complaint under Stage 2. The School will also give reasons for its decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Trustees will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is about fees and cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parent should put their complaint to the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and not the Headmaster, since decisions about fees are made by the Trustees. The Chair of F&GP may call for a briefing from members of staff, and may speak to the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of F&GP is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of F&GP will give reasons for his/her decision. The Chair of F&GP shall not be a member of the Complaints Panel should the complaint proceed to Stage 3.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Clerk to the Trustees, who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, two of whom shall be Trustees and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk to the Trustees, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen working days during term-time, subject to the availability of panellists. The Panel will not normally sit during half-terms or School holidays.

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- 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 three working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate. Informality and courtesy are expected of all parties at any review hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within seven working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Trustees and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Trustees and the Headmaster.

4 Expulsion or required removal

The review procedure to be used for parents who wish to have a decision of an expulsion or required removal reviewed is Stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure. It will be brought to their attention at the point when their child is expelled or required to leave and they will then have a period of seven days in which to make their request. The School will endeavour to complete this review process as quickly as reasonably practicable.

5 Recording complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

6 Confidentiality

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

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7 Independent member of the panel

The Department for Education has given the following advice on the selection of an "independent panel member" for involvement at the final stage of the complaints procedure:

“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”

8 Complaints history

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Uppingham School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the Independent Schools Inspectorate:

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

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net