



# Ackworth School

## Ackworth School Complaints Policy

Through the operation of this policy we aim to achieve the following: to recognize, address and to resolve complaints in a timely and transparent manner. Also to learn from events and reflect such learning in future practice.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it believes that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

### Complaints by Boarders

If boarders have concerns about anything, then there are many different people in school that they can discuss the matter with. If, however, they wish to make a formal complaint, then they need to complete a Pupil Complaint Form and hand it into the School Office. It will then be dealt with by either the Head or one of the Deputy Heads. They will make arrangements for a confidential meeting usually within 24 Hours, at which the pupil may be accompanied by an adult or fellow pupil. If the complaint is about the Head, then the form should be handed in to the School Office, marked *Confidential for the attention of the Secretary to School Committee*.

Pupil Complaint forms are available from the Heads of House and also the School Office.

The following telephone numbers may also be of use to pupils:

Childline	0800 1111
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Ofsted	0300 123 1231



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## Parental Complaints

### Introduction

Ackworth School is committed to providing the best possible quality of teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. Nevertheless it is acknowledged that, as in most organizations, things do not always go smoothly and it may occasionally be the case that parents or others may wish to make a complaint. If parents or others do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

Complainants can also be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, this includes all correspondence statements and records, and that in the case of parents raising a complaint their child/children will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their child/children raise in good faith. Records of the investigation and correspondence and meetings will all be kept safely in accordance with the School's Data Protection and Document Retention Policy.

This complaints procedure applies to all sections of the School, the Senior School, Coram House and the Nursery.

### Availability

The Complaints Policy is made available to all complainants via the School's website or in hard copy on request to the Head's PA.

### Relevance

Please note however that this Complaints Policy does not apply to parents of pupils who have left the School.

### Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during school holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time, with Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, to be completed within a further 28 days. In EYFS, complaints will be investigated within 4 working days from the complaint being received in writing.

If a complaint is made during a school holiday period, the complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days but any investigation or resolution and associated timescales may not commence until the School returns for the next academic term.

### Communication

The number of Formal Complaints registered under Stage 2 of this procedure will be published annually on the School's website (within this policy).



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## Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's Subject Teacher/Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Subject Teacher/Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult either the relevant Head of Department or the appropriate Deputy Head for pastoral or curricular matters. Similar arrangements apply within Coram House.
- As parents will appreciate, teaching staff are not always immediately available to take telephone calls. Therefore, please leave a message and a contact number with School Office Staff, who will ensure that the message is passed to the member of staff. The main school number is 01977 611401.
- Complaints made directly to the Head or a Deputy Head may be referred to the relevant Subject Teacher/Form Tutor or Head of Department unless the Head/Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints dealt with by them and the date on which they were received. A proforma to be used for such meetings is available from either the Head's PA or the Bursar's PA. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days or in the event that they and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the complainant will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head of Ackworth School or of Coram House, the Complainant should make their complaint directly to the Clerk to School Committee. He/she can be contacted by writing c/o the School and making clear that the matter is to be passed to the Clerk to the School Committee; such correspondence to be marked *Confidential*.



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## Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the Complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet with or speak to the Complainant concerned, normally within seven 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. He will ensure that all previous records relating to the complaint are gathered together and held on a specific file by his PA.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the Complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Clerk to the School Committee will deal with the matter himself/herself or pass it to a member of the School committee. They will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. He/she may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the complainant to discuss the matter further. Once the Clerk is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the complainant will be informed of the decision in writing. Correspondence relating to the complaint will be similarly gathered and filed as per the action detailed for the Head above. The Complainant will be provided with reasons for his/her decision.
- If the Complainant is still not satisfied, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.



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## Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If the Complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution and/or it being an appeal against the decision of the Head or the Clerk to School Committee under stage 2), they will be referred to either the Clerk to School Committee or his/her Deputy depending who dealt with the earlier stage. Such a complaint should be in writing and submitted to the Bursar, acting in his capacity as Secretary to the School Committee, c/o the School. It should be marked *Confidential*.
- The Complainant is required to state which elements of the Head's or the Clerk to School Committee's decision under Stage 2 that he/she wishes to appeal and also state the grounds for this.
- The matter will then be referred by that individual to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two members of the School Committee (one to be appointed as Chair) and one other person who is independent of the management and running of the School, none of whom will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. 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 fourteen 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 three days prior to the hearing.
- The Complainant may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the Complainant's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.



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- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within a maximum of 14 days of the Hearing and sooner if possible. The Panel will write to the Complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Head, and, where relevant, any individual subject of the complaint
- A copy of the findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Clerk to School Committee and the Head. The Clerk to School Committee will determine appropriate reporting to the School Committee and, in concert with the Head, will ensure that all recommendations resulting from the Panel are enacted regardless of the outcome of the Panel.

Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required under Part 6 paragraph 24 (3) (g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, to be seen by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

The School will provide ISI or Ofsted, 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. A written record of all complaints is kept including details of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel Hearing. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Complainants can make a complaint to Ofsted and/or ISI should they so wish. Contact details for ISI and Ofsted are as follows:

## **Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA  
Telephone 020 7600 0100 or e mail: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

## **Ofsted**

Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA  
Telephone 0300 123 4666 or e mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

For EYFS matters, contact Ofsted; for all other matters contact should be made with ISI.

*From September 2015 there were thirty-one complaints and concerns received under this policy.*