



## FRIENDS' SCHOOL SAFFRON WALDEN

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### Guidance for Parents

Friends' School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. The Complaints Procedure is available on the parents' sections of the website and can be sent to parents on request.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- We take action where appropriate
- Pupils are not penalised when a complaint is made in good faith

#### **“How should I complain?”**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. You can arrange to talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. 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 – for example, your child's form teacher, or House Staff. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to one of the 4 Heads of Year, the Assistant Head (Pastoral), the Deputy Head, or Head.

#### **“I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me”**

The school is here for you and your child and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

### **“I am not sure whether to complain or not”**

If, as parents, you have concerns, you are entitled to complain. If in doubt, you should contact the school, as we are here to help.

### **“What will happen next?”**

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. The member of staff consulted will make a written record of the concern or complaint and the date on which it was received. This will be kept in the pupil file. Should the matter not be resolved within 2 weeks or if parents are not happy with the resolution then parents will be advised to request a formal resolution.

### **Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis as set out above, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head or Head of the Junior School, clearly stating that a formal complaint is being made. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head or Head of the Junior School will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 3 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 or Head of the Junior School to carry out further investigations.

The Head or Head of the Junior School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head or Head of Junior School will also give written reasons for his decision. In case of the Nursery and the Junior School, copies of letters from the Head of the Junior School will be sent also to the Head.

If parents in the Nursery and Junior School are still not satisfied with the decision, they can refer the matter to the Head, who will conduct an investigation, discussion and decision making process as above.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should refer their complaint to the Governors.

### **Panel Hearing**

If parents fail to reach an earlier resolution, they will be referred to The Clerk of the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One person will be independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body. The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 2 weeks.

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 3 days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be necessary.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how this should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decisions and the reason for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendations if any will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, the Head, the Clerk of Governors and , where relevant, the person complained of.

### **“What happens about confidentiality?”**

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head and those directly involved. The Clerk of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer the matters to the police. You would be fully informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

We hope that we will be able to satisfy your concerns. If we do not, you may wish to seek advice from Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills): see their website at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/footer/How-to-complain>, or the Independent Schools Inspectorate: see their website [www.isi.net/contact](http://www.isi.net/contact) or telephone 020 7600 0100, or seek independent legal advice. There are certain circumstances in which the Secretary of State has an interest and you could contact him directly or through your lawyer or MP; he would then ask the Registrar of Independent Schools to investigate, usually through HM Inspectors of Schools. Records of the complaints will be kept for 3 years.

**“What if I am concerned about the welfare of my child and wish to discuss the matter with someone less closely connected with the school?”**

You or your son/daughter may contact the following people:

- 1.) Our school doctors Dr Clive Paul and Dr Cathy Cowley will investigate such complaints and can be contacted at The Rectory Practice, Saffron Walden. Tel. 01799 522327 or when they take a school surgery on a Wednesday 2.00 – 3.00pm.
- 2.) Pupils, parents or the school may wish to contact the Social Services Department Tel. 0845 603 7627. This is most likely to be appropriate in the case of suspected child abuse.
- 3.) Complaints made to the above, whether formal or informal will be recorded by them and followed up by them.

If you or your son/daughter wishes to make a formal complaint, or if one of the named persons above judges the complaint is of such a serious nature that it must be dealt with through the formal procedure, a written report of the complaint must be made. A form is provided for this and can be obtained from either of the named persons who may wish to help with the writing of it. Either of the named persons would then contact the Head and oversee subsequent investigations. (A response will be given within 3 days).

- 4.) A pupil may wish to involve a friend when going to see one of the named persons above.

**The school recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the young people in our care.**

**Number of Complaints received in the academic year 2010/11**

There were no complaints received.

Updated January 2012 (to be ratified by Governors at June Board)

Review date: June 2013