



Ashton House School

## **Complaints Policy**

<b>Policy Title:</b>	<b>Complaints Policy</b>
<b>Version:</b>	1.4
<b>Policy Summary:</b>	<b>This policy covers concerns and complaints from parents or guardians of current students and how the school and EYFS setting deals with them.</b>
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Headteacher
<b>Relevant to:</b>	All staff, volunteers, contractors and service providers, parents and guardians
<b>Date introduced:</b>	November 2016
<b>Next review date:</b>	November 2018
<b>Related School Documents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints Form</li> </ul>
<b>Date(s) modified/reviewed:</b>	<p>22.02.17 Complaints Form redesigned. (KH)</p> <p>November 2017 reviewed</p> <p>12.07.18 – inclusion of ‘and EYFS setting’</p> <p>13.07.18 –addition of Annex A – Annual Summary of Complaints</p>

# ASHTON HOUSE SCHOOL

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Introduction

This policy makes use of the procedures set out in the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 5th January 2015.

This policy will be made available in various formats and will be published on the school's website.

The school is required under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, revised in January 2015, to adopt, make available, and apply a complaints procedure. In order to comply with the Standards against which Independent School Inspections will be carried out.

All 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.

In accordance with paragraph 32 (1)(b) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Ashton House 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 the Independent Schools Inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### EYFS

The school will provide 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. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years. Parents may also wish to complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666.

Complaints are not defined in the Independent School Standards Regulations, but the guidance suggests that there is a difference between concerns which should be dealt with informally and complaints, which should be subject to a formal procedure i.e. it cannot be easily resolved by the intervention of a Senior Manager.

### Policy Scope

This policy covers concerns and complaints from parents or guardians of current students.

At Ashton House School, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be appointed as the Complaints Coordinator.

The policy does not cover complaints from members of staff as these are covered by the school's employment policies and procedures.

The majority of concerns/complaints received by the school are likely to fall into the following categories:

- **Academic.** Issues relating to the style and/or quality of teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc.
- **Pastoral Care.** Issues relating to bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of the child, etc.
- **Safeguarding.** Issues relating to how the school has managed child protection allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues.

- **Administrative.** Issues relating to communication between the school and parents or guardians, handling of admissions.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a real or perceived issue. This may result from actions pursued by the school, part of the school or a group of staff or an individual member of staff.

Complaints will always be handled sensitively and confidentially and parents and guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated with the seriousness they deserve. The act of making a complaint will never affect the way in which the school treats a child and a child or their parents or guardians will never be penalized because of making a complaint.

## **Procedure for Handling Concerns and Complaints**

### **Timeframes**

Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during the school's holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible and as a result the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 21 calendar days, if the complaint is made within term time, and as soon as practicable during the holiday periods.

If a complaint proceeds to Stage 3, the Complaints Management Committee, the school will aim to complete this stage within a further 21 calendar days, if the Stage 3 complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

### **Recording Complaints**

The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a hearing of the Complaints Management Committee; and the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld or not).

### **Mediation**

Mediation, such as through an external organisation, can take place at any time during the complaints procedure.

At any time within the steps and with the agreement of all parties, an independent mediator may be engaged by the parties with costs shared according to the context in which the mediator is engaged.

### **Handling Concerns and Complaints**

Formal complaints will only be accepted in a written form (letter or email). Stage one of the procedure may be bypassed if the parent or guardian feels that the nature of their concern is serious enough to warrant a formal complaint.

#### **Stage One (Concerns)**

Parents or guardians with a concern should first and foremost attempt to communicate with an appropriate staff member regarding the issue through informal means so that perceptions of an issue are shared between all parties and an attempt can be made to reach an outcome that is satisfactory for all concerned.

In all cases, every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the issue within 7 calendar days if the complaint is made within term time, and as soon as practicable during the holiday periods. A written and dated record of the issue, any discussions and correspondence and any agreed resolution will be retained by the school.

If the issue relates to the headteacher, parents or guardians should contact the school's proprietor.

## **Stage Two (Formal Complaints)**

If the issue cannot be resolved via stage one of the procedure or if the parent or guardian feels that their concern is serious enough to warrant a formal response from the school, then the complaint should be put in writing to the headteacher requesting a formal investigation. The headteacher will appoint a member of the school's senior team to investigate the issues relating to the complaint and to compile a report of the facts. This may involve interviews with the parent or guardian concerned.

Once the headteacher has, as far as is practicable, been provided with a report of the relevant facts from the investigating senior team member, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed of the outcome along with reasons for any decisions or actions that will be pursued.

In all cases, every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the issue within 14 calendar days if the complaint is made within term time, and as soon as practicable during the holiday periods. A written and dated record of the complaint, the investigation, any discussions and correspondence and any agreed resolution will be retained by the school.

If following the headteacher's decision the parent or guardian is not satisfied, a formal request to move to stage 3 of this procedure can be made with 7 calendar days of receipt of the headteacher's decision.

If the formal complaint relates to the headteacher, parents or guardians should contact the school's proprietor. The proprietor will appoint a member of the school's senior team to investigate the issues relating to the complaint and to compile a report of the facts. The procedure will be followed as set out above, with the Proprietor acting in the role of the headteacher.

## **Stage Three (Panel Review)**

If the parent or guardian believes that issue has not been resolved via stage two of this procedure, they request a formal review of the decision by an independent panel. The request must be put in writing and addressed to the school proprietor and received within 7 calendar days of the headteacher's decision being received by the parent or guardian.

In requesting a review, the parent or guardian should clearly state the reasons for their request and why they believe that the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved.

The school's proprietor will assemble the Complaints Management Committee which is chaired by the Proprietor and three other members, at least one of whom will be from outside of the School. No members of the panel shall have previously been involved in the complaint.

The committee will review the complaint, the procedure followed by the school and the headteacher's decision and will request a formal meeting with the parent or guardian to hear their appeal and may request a reinvestigation of the issues if they deem it to be necessary.

In all cases, every reasonable effort should be made to conclude the review within 21 calendar days if the request to review the decision is made within term time, and as soon as practicable during the holiday periods. A written and dated record of the review and any correspondence and any decision or agreed resolution will be retained by the school.

The Complaints Management Committee will reach a decision and communicate the outcome of their review to the parent or guardian and the headteacher within 28 calendar of receiving the request to review the complaint decision. The headteacher is responsible for communication the decision of the Complaints Management Committee to those staff members involved in the complaint.

The decision of the Complaints Management Committee is final.

**Annex A**

**Annual Record of Complaints**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Informal Complaints/concerns (Stage 1)</b>	<b>Formal Complaints (Stage 2)</b>	<b>Formal Complaints (Stage 3)</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



# Ashton House School

## COMPLAINTS FORM

Date of complaint:	
Complaint brought by:	
Complaint brought to:	
Name and position of person completing form (please print)	
Detailed description of what happened (What, when, where, who)* (Attach letter if complaint was written)	
Action taken*	
Has the problem been resolved to the satisfaction of all involved?	YES / NO
If not, what arrangements have been made to work towards a speedy solution?*	
Signature	Date form completed
Head Teacher's Signature	Date

\*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

*Form reviewed February 2017*