



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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This policy applies to parents of children currently attending the Academy School (the **School**).

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered at the School. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headteacher to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 7.13 of the School's Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than 5 working days from the date the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil took effect.

Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure.

If you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's life at the School, please contact an appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. We take expressions of concern seriously and wish to follow them up promptly. We know that things can go wrong and we want to be able to sort things out.

If you believe something has gone wrong and you wish to make a complaint, the procedures below describe how parents can make a complaint. In dealing with such matters, we recognise the importance of confidentiality, fairness and ensuring that no one suffers unjustly. This is particularly the case with respect to the student; under no circumstances would the School discriminate against a student because of the expression of a complaint.

Our procedure has three stages: informal, formal and a panel hearing.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure:

'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during the School's term time, excluding bank holidays and half term; and

'parent(s)' means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil on the School roll about whom the complaint relates.

1. Stage 1 - Informal resolution

- a. Any parent of the School can make a complaint on an informal basis in writing. We hope that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. We would anticipate that the complaint would be made to the Headteacher or a member of staff.
- b. The complaint would be discussed with the parent and a solution proposed which would meet with the agreement of the parent.
- c. It is anticipated that such a solution would be proposed within 7 working days of the complaint. A complaint received in the School holidays may take longer to resolve, but the School will endeavour to respond as soon as practicable.

2. Formal process

- a. In the unlikely case that the parent of the pupil was not satisfied with the response to the complaint in accordance with section 1 above, the parent has the right to put the complaint in writing under the formal procedure. In such circumstances the parent should make their complaint in writing to the Headteacher at garth@academyhampstead.com.
- b. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, with other members of staff as appropriate, the appropriate course of action to take. The Headteacher may decide to delegate the decision-making to another member of staff if appropriate. The parent should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at Stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, the parent will be advised that they will be dealt with under Stage 1.
- c. In most cases and where possible, the Headteacher will meet and/or speak to the parent within 10 working days after the receipt of the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- d. It may be necessary for the Headteacher, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations and they will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. If a complaint is received within two weeks before the end of the term, the complaint is likely to take longer to resolve owing to School holidays and the unavailability of personnel.
- e. Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher, or someone determined by the Headteacher, would write to the parent with a decision. It is anticipated that the Headteacher, or party determined by the Headteacher, would respond to such a complaint within 20 working days of the formal complaint being made. A formal complaint received within two weeks before the end of term, or in the School holidays, may take longer to resolve, but the School will endeavour to respond with its findings as soon as practicable.
- f. If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the parent should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the School (whose contact details are available from the School Office on request).

3. Panel Hearing

- a. Should the parent not be satisfied with the decision under Stage 2, the parent may request that a hearing be held to consider the complaint and the School's response. Such a request would need to be made to the Chair of the School (whose contact details are available from the School

Office on request) within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 decision.

- b. The parent must state in their request all grounds for complaint and the outcome desired. The parent must also send a list of any documents they believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see, along with any documents in their own possession which relate to the matters set out in their complaint and which they wish the Panel to see.
- c. The Chair will usually acknowledge the parent's request in writing within 5 working days, will promptly appoint a Chair of the Panel who will deal with pre-hearing issues (in consultation with the other members of the Panel), schedule a date for the hearing and send copies of relevant documentation to the Headteacher and the Chair of the Panel. A Panel Hearing will be called as soon as reasonably practicable, normally within 28 working days of receiving the request for a Panel Hearing. The Panel will not normally sit during School holidays.
- d. The Panel will not consider any area of complaint that has not been raised previously in Stages 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure with the exception of an appeal by the parent against the School's decision to permanently exclude their child.
- e. The Panel hearing the complaint will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint of which one will be independent of the management and running of the School. All members of the Panel would be appointed by or on behalf of Academy School (Hampstead) LLP ("the proprietor").
- f. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint, from either the parent or the School, or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the Panel Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties no later than 5 working days prior to the Panel Hearing.
- g. The Headteacher may supply to the Chair a statement in response to the Stage 3 complaint and any documentation which the Headteacher wishes to go before the Panel Hearing. The Headteacher should do so no later than 5 working days prior to the Panel Hearing.
- h. The Panel will provide a bundle of documents that it deems relevant to all the relevant parties no later than 3 working days prior to the Panel Hearing.
- i. The parent concerned would be allowed to attend the panel hearing, together with someone else if desired. This may be a relative, teacher or friend, but not a lawyer. Parents are required to confirm the name and profession of the person they wish to be accompanied by, by no later

than 5 working days after the Panel hearing date is confirmed. The Panel has discretion as to who attends the hearing.

- j. The Headteacher may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a colleague. The Headteacher will be required to confirm the name of the person they wish to be accompanied by, by no later than 5 working days after the Panel hearing date is confirmed. The Panel has discretion as to who attends the hearing.
- k. The School will make reasonable arrangements to facilitate the parent(s)' attendance at the Panel Hearing. However, if the opportunity to attend is not exercised or cannot reasonably be facilitated, the School will continue with the Panel Hearing in line with this policy.
- l. In most cases, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint without the need for further investigation. If the Panel deem that further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- m. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and recommendations (if any) within 15 working days of the hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the appropriate parties, including the parents, the Headteacher and anyone complained about, where relevant. The decision of the Panel will be final and is not subject to any further right of appeal. A copy will be available for inspection at the school premises by the Proprietor and the Headteacher.

4. Confidentiality and Records

- a. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the 2002 Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- b. Written records will be kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Panel Hearing (Stage 3). Action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded.

5. Vexatious Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

6. Complaints under the Complaints Procedure 2023/24

The Independent Schools' Inspectorate requires the School to publish the number of formal complaints registered under the School's Complaints Procedure at Stage 2 or 3 in the preceding school year. This is shown below:

- For the academic year 2023-24 there were no formal complaints.

Reviewed and updated by Andrew Sandars
August 2024