

COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy applies to all current pupils at Hereford Cathedral Junior School including those in our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings.

This policy applies to all parents of pupils currently at the school. This policy does not apply to parents of past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. This policy does not apply to parents of prospective pupils. This policy applies to any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that the staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. A copy of this policy is available from the school office on request. The policy is also available on the school website (www.herefordcs.com). Parents of children in the EYFS may also make a complaint to Ofsted and/or to ISI (The Independent Schools Inspectorate) if their complaint is concerning the school's fulfillment of the EYFS requirements. (see below for contact details).

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We would hope to deal with the majority of concerns in an informal way, but proper procedures are in place if a formal complaint is made.

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.

It is our policy to state the number of formal complaints received during the preceding school year. During the school year 2023/24 the school received no formal complaints.

The Complaints Process

STAGE 1: MAKING AN INFORMAL COMPLAINT

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's form teacher or subject teacher. The form or subject teacher will, if appropriate, involve other members of

staff. If a parent is concerned about an academic issue, they may contact the Director of Studies. If a parent is concerned about a disciplinary or pastoral issue, they may contact the Deputy Head.

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the form or subject teacher, or with the Director of Studies or the Deputy Head, or their concern is of a more serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Head of the Junior School: unless the complaint concerns the Head of the Junior School, in which case it should be raised with the Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School.

The Head of the Junior School considers any complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. The Head of the Junior School will consult with other members of staff as necessary and, following this consultation, feedback will be provided to the complainant and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the area of concern, along with information regarding any measures that the School intends to take in response.

All informal complaints should be handled within a time scale that is reasonable, and normally within 10 term time working days.

In the event that a satisfactory resolution is not reached, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

STAGE 2: MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Should parents not be satisfied with the outcome of this informal process, they should complain formally in writing to the Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 term time working days and a response made within a reasonable time period, usually within ten term time working days where practicably possible.

In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 term time 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 carry out further investigations.

The Headmaster will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will give written reasons for the decision within seven term time working days and explain the right to proceed to Stage 3 and what that entails.

STAGE 3: APPEALS COMMITTEE HEARING

Should a matter not be resolved through both informal and formal procedures, the

complaint may be renewed in writing to the Clerk of Governors within five working days of receiving the decision at stage 2 above. The letter should give full details of the complaint and enclose all relevant documents and full contact details. The letter will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within five term time working days.

The Clerk of Governors will convene a panel of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters that are subject to complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The independent member should be outside of the school's workforce, not a member of the governing body and not otherwise involved with the management of the school. Guidance from DfE regarding the identity of an independent panel member reads as follows:

'Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising 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.'

A hearing will be held as soon as practicable and normally within ten term time working days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint. Parents will be entitled to attend, accompanied, if they wish, by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The parent does not have the right to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing, although the school can allow this if it wishes.

The parents' right to request and attend a panel is not forfeit because they have initiated legal proceedings, or indicated that they might do so.

The school will attempt to accommodate parental availability for dates and consider any comments from parents concerning the panel's composition. Should the parent decide not to attend, the hearing will still take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

The panel will conduct a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a judicial review style check that process was followed. The findings, and recommendations, if any, will be made available in writing to the parents and available for inspection on the school premises by the governors and head, and where relevant the person complained about within 28 term time working days.

1. COMPLAINTS IN EYFS

Additional requirements apply for EYFS settings beyond those which apply to the main school. Notwithstanding the time scales given above, all formal complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the

outcome within 28 days. Written records of any complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint directly to OFSTED or Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) should they wish to, if their complaint is concerning the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements. That said, it is expected that complaints will go through the School's complaints procedure first. Details of how to contact ISI and OFSTED are given at the end of this policy.

The complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. A written record is kept of all complaints, and of their resolutions, for a period of 3 years.

2. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Written records will be kept of all formal complaints and of whether they are resolved at stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will be kept of any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether or not they are upheld). 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests to access them.

Retention: it is our policy to retain records of complaints as follows:

- Complaints that do not have any safeguarding implications: records retained for a minimum of 7 years.
- Complaints that do have a safeguarding implication: records retained for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

3. PERSISTENT CORRESPONDENCE

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

How to make a complaint to OFSTED

Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint directly to OFSTED should they wish to, if their complaint is concerning the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements. OFSTED's helpdesk is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday to assist you if you have concerns about your child's school. You can contact the helpdesk by telephone on 0300 123 1231, or by email (enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) The adviser on the helpdesk will discuss your concerns with you, advise you on whether to make a complaint to OFSTED in writing, or suggest other ways in which you can pursue your concerns.

To make a complaint to OFSTED you should write to them at:

OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

General helpline 0300 123 1231;

or email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

or complete an online complaint form: <http://live.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints/>.

How to make a complaint to the ISI

Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) should they wish to, if their complaint is concerning the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements. The ISI can be contacted at:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London ED1A 9HA,
Tel: 020 7600 0100, Email: info@isi.net

Reviewed September 2024 by H Hoffmann

Date of Next Review September 2025