



# Complaints Policy & Procedures

## Revision Schedule

Title	Complaints Policy
Version	1.0
Status	Approved
Approve Date	September 2018
Review Date	

Version	Status	Date	Author	Comments



## **Complaints Policy & Procedures**

### **Purpose**

Whilst we believe that our approach to parental partnerships will limit incidents of disagreement between us, we acknowledge that on occasion, parents and other stakeholders may feel that the school has not dealt with their concern or complaint as they would wish.

The purpose of this procedure is therefore to ensure that any complaint against Sir Thomas Fremantle School Free School will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, as required by legislation in Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards((England)) Regulations 2010.

The aim of this is to achieve a speedy and satisfactory resolution to any complaints received

The school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for students. We hope that our forum, which will convene at least half termly, will allow stakeholders to bring issues to the attention of senior leaders without the need to instigate formal proceedings.

### **Scope**

This procedure deals with specified day-to-day concerns or complaints against individual members of staff, their action or the management and/or operation of the school.

A concern is any query concerning the operation of the school which reflects adversely upon it.

A complaint requires the attention of the Senior Leadership Team of the school. Complaints are defined as matters relating to breaches of the law, to non-compliance with DfE Regulations or any issue which would bring the reputation of the school into disrepute.

### **Procedure:**

#### **Concerns**

Concerns will be dealt with by the member of staff best placed to address the issue who will undertake an investigation of the situation.

When concerns are received by telephone it is the role of the receptionist to route the call to the member of staff most able to deal with it. In the event of uncertainty, the call will be directed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Any concerns expressed in writing will be passed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will direct them to the member of staff most able to deal with them.

In every case an initial response will be provided within 24 hours (except where this may carry into a weekend or holiday) and a final resolution of issues arrived at as soon as possible.

Resolutions may include an apology, explanation, admission that the situation could have been dealt with more effectively, an assurance that the situation will not recur or an undertaking that the School will review the procedure in the light of the concern.

## **Complaints**

Our belief is that many complaints can be resolved on an informal basis and we encourage this. This may be achieved through a meeting, telephone conversation or email exchange between the complainant and member of staff or with an additional staff member as mediator.

Where issues cannot be resolved informally, they become a matter for the Senior Leadership Team or, exceptionally, for the School Governors to address.

Once the complaint has been received in writing, a record of the process of the resolution of the complaint will be kept on the Complaint Action Record (Appendix 1) which will be retained by the school.

In every case an initial response will be provided within 24 hours (except where this may carry into a weekend or holiday) and a final resolution of issues arrived at as soon as possible.

### **Stage 1:**

The complaint will be heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team who is neither the Headmaster nor the subject of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be referred to stage 2. **We aim to respond within 5 school days.**

### **Stage 2:**

The complaint will be heard by the Headmaster and will not involve any individual who has been involved in the previous stage of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be referred to stage 3. **We aim to respond within 10 school days. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for this.**

### **Stage 3:**

The complainant must write to the Chair of Governors outlining the nature of the complaint. The Chair will convene a complaints panel of at least three people none of whom have been involved in any previous stages of the complaint. One of the panel members must be independent to the

management and running of the school. **Subject to availability of the required panel members, the hearing will be held within 10 days of the Headmaster's stage 2 letter.**

The complainant, **parent and, if applicable, the subject of the complaint,** may attend the meeting in order to present their case; either may be accompanied.

The possible outcomes of the complaints appeal panel are:

- ^ Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- ^ Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- ^ Decide upon appropriate action to resolve the complaint.
- ^ Recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The chair of the Governors' appeal panel will inform the complainant **and the member of staff who is the subject of the complaint (where applicable),** of the outcome of the complaints appeal hearing in writing either by electronic mail or otherwise **within 10 days of the decision being taken.**

The Governors' appeal panel hearing is the final stage of the School's complaints process.

If the complaint regards the Headteacher, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted directly through school reception.

## **Records**

Written records of all complaints will be kept.

This includes all documentation and a record of the stage of resolution of the complaint.

All such records will be classified and kept as 'confidential' except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Regulation (Independent Schools Standard)(England) Regulations 2011; where the disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

A record of the number of complaints received each academic year will be available upon request in writing to the school.

It is the responsibility of the Headmaster to monitor, evaluate and review this procedure. The procedure will be reviewed at least every two years.

## **Appendices:**

- ^ Complaints Form
- ^ Checklist
- ^ Complaints Flow Diagram

Agreed by the Full Governing body

Signed by: ..... Chair of Governors

Date .....

Signed by: ..... Mr Neale Pledger; Headmaster

Date .....

## Appendix 1 – Concern or Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the complaints co-ordinator who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name:	
Your relationship to the Student:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Day time telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint.	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	
Date	

<b>Official use</b>	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Referred to:	
Date	

## Appendix 2 - Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- ^ The hearing is as informal as possible.
- ^ Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- ^ After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- ^ The Headmaster may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- ^ The Headmaster is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- ^ The complainant may question both the Headmaster and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- ^ The panel may ask questions at any point.
- ^ The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- ^ The Headmaster is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- ^ Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- ^ The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.