

COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR PARENTS



Harrow International School Bengaluru welcomes suggestions and comments from parents. It takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise and wishes to work with them in the best interests of the young people in the School's care.

This Complaints Policy is to be used as a mechanism for resolving issues of genuine concern in good faith and in a non-adversarial manner. It shall not be used where the complaint relates to the Permanent Exclusion or the permanent removal of a pupil at the request of the School (the procedure for which is set out elsewhere); to obtain information from the School not available under the Parent Contract or otherwise by law; to re-open a Complaint on a matter in respect of which the process set out in the Complaints Procedure has been completed; to avoid or delay payment of any sum due under the Parent Contract; by pupils to raise concerns (there is specific policy to address pupils' complaints); in bad faith, in an abusive or threatening manner or to pursue a frivolous issue or in a way that is frivolous or vexatious.

The making of a Complaint shall not prejudice the right of the School to require the parents to remove their son from the School in accordance with the Parent Contract. After making a Complaint, the parents should not thereafter approach any member of the School's staff about the Complaint, except in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. Such an approach may preclude the staff member's involvement in the procedure.

All Complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. The timeframes set out in this Complaints Procedure may change depending on the circumstances of each particular case. It may take longer to resolve a complaint which has been raised during or shortly before a School holiday, when outside agencies are involved, during periods of significant disruption to school life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence. However, deviation from the normal timescales for resolving a Complaint during term-time will be on an exceptional basis, and the School will take reasonable steps to limit such delays, and will keep Parents informed should revisions to the timeframes be required.

Complaints Procedure for Students (Day and Boarding)

Whilst this policy is focused on addressing the procedure for parent complaints, the school is committed to ensuring that students, both boarders and day, have access to a clear and easily accessible process for raising concerns or complaints about the boarding provision. Boarders will not face any penalties or repercussions for making complaints in good faith.

Complaints Register

The school maintains a comprehensive log of all complaints, which includes complaints related to boarding provision. This record clearly identifies complaints, the actions taken by the school as a result

(regardless of whether they are upheld), and any complaints that were subsequently withdrawn. Emerging patterns or trends identified from complaints will be reviewed during Senior Leadership Team meetings to ensure continuous improvement and address any recurring concerns.

Who may complain?

The Complaints Procedure may be used by Parents of pupils who have started at the School (i.e. currently registered pupils on the roll). It may not be used by Parents of prospective pupils, nor by Parents of former pupils, unless, in the case of a former pupil, the Complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered as a pupil.

Where a Complaint is brought by one Parent only, other than in exceptional circumstances any other adult who entered into the Parent Contract will be kept informed and invited to participate in the formal stages of the process set out in the Complaints Procedure. Other adults whom the School believes have “parental responsibility” for the Pupil may also be kept informed and invited to participate in the formal stages of the process set out in the Complaints Procedure (unless prevented from doing so by law).

The School has no obligation to and will not normally entertain an anonymous complaint.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that Complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If Parents make a Complaint face-to-face or by telephone, it is often possible to resolve the matter immediately. Parents should normally make the Complaint to the House Master/Mistress of the Pupil. If the Complaint is of an academic nature, it is likely that the House Master/Mistress will discuss it with, or refer it to, the relevant Head of Department. If the House Master/Mistress cannot resolve the Complaint alone, he or she may consult a senior colleague.

Parents may prefer to take the Complaint directly to another a member of staff of equivalent seniority to the House Master/Mistress. In the event that Parents make a Complaint directly to the Head Master, he or she may refer the matter to the House Master or another member of staff with equivalent seniority. Depending on the nature of the Complaint, the Head Master may choose to deal with the Complaint formally under Stage 2, in which case he may ask the Parents to provide the Stage 2 Letter described below (or if they had already made their Complaint in writing, treat it as the Stage 2 Letter).

If the Complaint is not made in writing, the House Master/Mistress or other person to whom the Complaint is made will make a written record of the Complaint and the date on which it is received.

Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days then the Parents will be advised to proceed with their Complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure (unless the Complaint has been addressed to the Head Master who has already chosen to deal with it formally under Stage 2).

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

In the event the Complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis as above, Parents should put the Complaint in writing to the Head Master, and should include in this letter what action they would like the School to take (Stage 2 Letter).

In most cases, the Head Master will contact the Parents about the Complaint within five working days of receipt of the Stage 2 Letter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head Master, or their nominee (for example, another senior member of staff who has not been substantively involved in the Complaint to date or involved at Stage 1) to carry out an investigation of the issues raised in the Stage 2 Letter and provide an investigation report to the Head Master (Investigation Report). When the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he or she will write to the Parents, informing them of his or her decision, giving reasons for the decision and, if appropriate, describe any action taken or proposed (Decision). In most cases, the Head Master will provide his or her Decision within 15 working days of the Stage 2 Letter. The Head Master will normally provide any Investigation Report with the Decision and other relevant documents, subject to any redactions necessary to protect third party data and confidential information.

If the Parents are unsatisfied with the Decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

Complaints rarely reach this formal level but, if the Parents are not satisfied with the Decision at Stage 2, they may appeal the Decision within 10 working days of receipt by writing to the Chair of Governors (Stage 3 Letter). The Stage 3 Letter should set out the grounds for appealing the Decision, the action the Parents would like the School to take and any supporting documentation and material that the Parents wish the Panel to take into account.

Within five working days of receipt, the Parents will receive a response acknowledging receipt and scheduling a hearing to take place within the next 20 working days. A panel will be convened to hear the appeal (Panel). The Panel shall be selected by the Chair of Governors and shall comprise at least three persons, at least one of whom will be an independent panel member. The Panel shall not include any persons directly involved in the matters relating to the Complaint and shall have no connection with the Pupil or family of the Pupil who is the subject of the Complaint. The Chairman of Governors will appoint one of the independent Panel members to act as chairman of the Panel (Panel Chairman). The Chair of Governors will ensure that panel members are selected impartially, free from bias, and based on their ability to address the complaint objectively and without any conflict of interest.

The Panel's role is to review the Stage 3 Letter on the basis of the evidence before it and to decide whether to: (i) uphold the grounds of appeal in full or in part; and (ii) make any recommendations to the School as it sees fit. The Panel shall not have the power to make any monetary award or compensation or impose sanctions on pupils or staff.

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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

Any new complaint or evidence which is, in the Panel's opinion, irrelevant to the Stage 3 Letter shall not be considered by the Panel.

The hearing will not be conducted in an adversarial way and the primary concern of the Panel will be to determine the appeal justly and fairly. The Panel Chairman has discretion to conduct the hearing in any way which he or she considers will achieve this. The Head Master will usually attend on behalf of the School. The Parents will also be invited to attend and reasonable steps will be taken to accommodate their attendance. Parents can be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish. If the Parents do not wish to attend or are unable to attend the hearing for whatever reason and no alternative dates can be reasonably accommodated, the hearing will proceed in their absence and the Panel may rely on written submissions. The Parents shall not be permitted to record the hearing. Notes of the hearing, which (following approval by the Panel Chairman) will be circulated to the parties as the official record of the hearing as soon as practicable following the hearing (usually with the Panel's decision). If the School or the Parents dispute the contents of the note, the Panel Chairman may require an amendment to be made or direct that their comments be appended to the note.

The Panel will deliberate in private and reach its decision within 10 working days of the conclusion of the hearing. The Panel may require longer to reach a decision, for example because they consider it necessary to undertake further investigation or seek expert guidance, in which case the parties shall be notified accordingly. The Panel's decision, the reasons for it, and its recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the Parents, the Head Master and the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person(s) complained about.

The decision of the Panel shall be final and conclude this procedure.

Recording of Complaints

A written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stages 1, 2 or 3 and any action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld), shall be kept. During the 2023/24 academic year a total of 0 formal complaints were received which required a stage 2 panel hearing.

This complaints procedure provides for any complaints panel to make findings and recommendations. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head Master.

The complaints procedure also ensures that all correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential, except in circumstances where host country laws permit access. These records are stored securely, with controlled access to the complaints register, ensuring the privacy and integrity of the information.

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