

Annan School

Complaints Procedure

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

We aim to have positive and productive relationships with parents and/or carers but we understand that there may be occasions when concerns or complaints are raised. We have an open-door policy and we are committed to taking concerns seriously. We encourage parents and/or carers to share any concerns with us on an informal basis in order to facilitate a prompt and positive resolution.

The main aim of this Complaints Policy is to resolve any complaint as fairly and promptly as possible. We also aim to:

Ensure that the procedures for dealing with complaints are rigorous, transparent and applied fairly and without bias.

Use feedback from parents to improve the school's provision.

Who does this procedure apply to?

This procedure applies to parents of all children at the school, including those in the EYFS.

The procedure is limited to the parents of children currently on roll at the school, or parents of ex-pupils of the school if the complaint was first raised whilst the child was on roll at the school.

The complaints procedure does not apply to issues relating to admissions or fees.

Exclusions, staff grievances and disciplinary procedures also fall outside of the school's complaints procedure.

The complaints procedure does not apply to a concern or concerns raised by a collective of parents. Whilst concerns in these circumstances will be responded to appropriately, parents should raise their concerns and how these affect their child on an individual basis in order to be able to progress a complaint in line with this procedure.

Concern or complaint?

Any matter about which a parent of a child is unhappy and seeks action by the school will be considered as a concern or complaint.

The school will ask the complainant, at the earliest stage, what they think may resolve the issue and when responding will communicate the outcome of each stage of the complaints process.

A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.

Whether a concern or complaint is made informally or formally, all parties should ensure details are only known to those involved in investigating the complaint. Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.

The number of formal complaints for the preceding school year will be shown on the Complaints Policy available on the website.

Working days

References to *working days* apply to Monday to Friday during term time. Complaints made during the holiday period of the school will be dealt with at the beginning of the following term.

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE:

Stage 1 Informal

- All concerns or complaints will be dealt with as an informal complaint in the first instance.
- The vast majority of complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where complaints are resolved straight away through the class teacher or Principal depending on the nature of the complaint. Informal complaints may be made verbally, by email or in writing.

- All complaints will be dealt with by an appropriate member of staff with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent or child. On certain issues, the Principal should be consulted and may decide to deal with the concern or complaint directly at this stage. In all instances, the Principal will be kept informed. Where a reply is made by email, the Principal will be consulted before the email is sent and copied into the email exchange.
- Informal complaints will be dealt with as soon as possible and where possible *within 5 working days* of the informal complaint being made. Where a meeting is arranged, brief notes will be taken during the initial meeting in order to prevent any later challenge or disagreement about what has been said, the notes will be kept securely. The complainant will receive a copy of the notes and will be asked to agree they are accurate. A copy of any written response will be added to the investigation record. It is not school policy to allow the recording via a mobile device of a meeting with a complainant. Where the complainant requests that the meeting is clerked, this can be arranged with prior notice.
- The response may be made verbally or by email. **This timeframe only applies to informal complaints made verbally or sent by email to the school office.** Emails sent to the email address of an individual member of staff may take longer to be responded to as individual mailboxes are monitored less frequently.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, it progresses to the next stage, when it becomes a formal complaint and is reported in writing.

Stage 2 Formal

- **Complaints will only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the informal stage and only then if the complainant wishes to escalate a matter to the formal stage.**
- The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Principal.
- The Principal will document it and acknowledge it in writing *within 5 working days* of receipt. The acknowledgment will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be *within 10 working days*; if this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- Any necessary investigation, consultation, interviews and action will take place and a written response to the complaint will be provided to the complainant. Where appropriate, the response will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be advised of the next stage which is to have the complaint heard before a panel appointed by the School Proprietors.

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 2 above, then they will be invited to write to the Proprietor (at the school address) requesting a panel hearing. Such a request cannot be made by email. The request for a panel hearing should include a copy of the original letter of formal complaint, and the grounds for appeal in relation to the response at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
- The request for a panel hearing must be made as soon as possible and in any event *within 5 working days* of the decision in Stage 2 of the complaint being notified.
- The Proprietor will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint *within 15 working days* of the receipt of the notification. The complainant will be notified *with at least five working days' notice* of the date of the panel hearing.
- The panel will consist of at least three members, including one of the proprietors, a member of the SLT not involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and either one or two panel members who are independent of the management and running of the school. Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietors.

- Parents may attend and be accompanied by one other person at a panel hearing if they wish. Parents do not have to attend the hearing.
- The panel will consider the school's response and carry out further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
- The panel will aim to reach a final decision on the complaint, and any recommendations, as quickly as possible, normally *within 5 working days* and in any event *no more than 15 working days* after the panel hearing.
- The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and they will be sent to the complainant and where relevant the person(s) complained about and to the proprietors of the school for inspection on the school premises.
- The decision of the panel is final.

Written records and confidentiality

Written records are kept of each concern or complaint and state whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure, proceeded to a panel hearing, and any action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). These records, correspondence and statements relating to individual complaints are kept confidential and in line with GDPR regulations except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

The school will take all reasonable steps to investigate a complainant's concerns.

A copy of the outcome of the investigation and any recommendations made will be given to the complainant following any formal investigations.

There may be occasions however when the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same complaint each time, this will be viewed as a 'persistent' or 'vexatious' complaint. If this is the case the complainant will be informed that the matter has been closed and the school will not respond further.

Where complaints are deemed after investigation to be either malicious or unnecessarily time wasting, or vexatious complaints continue, the Proprietor will consider what further action may be necessary. Ultimately where the situation cannot be resolved or has resulted in an irretrievable breakdown in the school parent relationship, this may lead to a family being asked to remove their child from the school. If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, the school will seek legal advice.

Additional guidance for children in the Kindergarten (Early Years Foundation Stage)

Written complaints **relating to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage** will be investigated and notification of the outcome will be given within 28 days of having received the complaint. Parents may refer complaints relating to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Ofsted Early Years or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, provided the above complaints procedure has been followed.

The contact details are: Telephone: **0300 123 4666** email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Or the **Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1 9HA**

ISI Telephone **0207 600 0100** email: concerns@isi.net

Record keeping

Written records of complaints made under the formal part of the school complaints procedure will be kept by the school. This will record whether the complaint was resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. It will also record the action taken by the school (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld). 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the proprietors of the school and will be reviewed annually or in the light of changes to policy or procedure.

Record of formal complaints/panel hearings 2024-2025

There were no formal complaints raised during the academic year 2024-2025.