

33a COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE



*A copy of this policy is published in the following areas:
The school's website*

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Reviewed by: Kath Archer, Executive Assistant to the Headmaster

A. Complaints Overview

A1. Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem or a matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks responsive action. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Should we suspect that a complaint raises an issue where a member of staff has caused actual or potential harm to students then this will be treated as an allegation against the member of staff and will be looked at under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

A2. General approach

Truro School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Truro School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and from the school office. Truro School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

Truro School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and will always take seriously any complaint that might be raised.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be adversely affected by a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially within the School

The complaints policy does not apply to prospective pupils, and the schools failure to admit them, nor does it cover complaints from parents of pupils who have left (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)

Anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

B. Complaints Procedures

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

In the Senior School:

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor or Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means

to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult one of the Deputy Heads. If the complaint is about a member of the boarding staff, the informal resolution should be sought first with the Deputy Head.

Complaints made directly to one of the Deputy Heads or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress unless the Deputy Head or the Headmaster deem it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Tutor, Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and the conclusions reached and how the matter was resolved. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 days or in the event that the Form Tutor or Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

In the Prep School:

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Class Teacher in the first instance and then Head of Pre-Prep (for pupils in Nursery to Year 2) or Pastoral Care Coordinator (for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6).

Complaints made to the Head of Prep will usually be referred to the Class Teacher, Head of Pre-Prep or Pastoral Care Coordinator unless the Head of Prep deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

A written record will be kept of all concerns and complaints made, the date they were received and the conclusions reached and how the matter was resolved. In the event that the Class Teacher, Head of Pre-Prep or Pastoral Care Coordinator and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution within 10 days then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution – for both schools

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster, setting out their complaint in full outlining any evidence upon which they intend to rely and the outcome they would like to achieve. Parents should expect an acknowledgement within 3 working days and the Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Headmaster will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 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. He may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and parents may therefore be asked to meet for a further discussion about the problem. Parents may take a friend or relative to this meeting. The investigating member of staff may also carry out a full investigation of the complaint and may interview staff and other pupils involved. A written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept.

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 normally within 10 working days though a response may exceed 10 days during holiday time. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing – for both schools

If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved as described in Stage 1 or 2 above, then the parent(s)/family should put their complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Governors, for the attention

of the Chairman of Governors. (Chair of Governors, c/o Clerk to the Governors, Truro School, Trennick Lane, Truro, TR1 1TH) requesting a Panel Hearing. This appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of the date of the School's decision made under Stage 2. The complainant should provide a list of complaints made against the School which they believe have not been satisfactorily resolved by the Stage 2 procedure and the outcome desired. The parents 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. They should also state whether they wish to attend the hearing or whether the Panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions. 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 parents against a sanction imposed under the Behaviour Policy.

A panel hearing will go ahead unless the complainant later indicates he or she is now satisfied and does not wish to proceed further. A panel hearing will, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the complainant may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel will consider the complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure will also be used for appeals against sanctions imposed under the Behaviour Policy.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one person will be independent of the management and running of the School and the remainder will normally be School Governors. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman, who, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint via the Clerk to the Governors and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days.

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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 working days prior to the hearing. The parent(s)/family may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. The parent does not have a right to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing. The Headmaster will normally also attend the hearing and may bring a colleague (normally the senior member of staff who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 of this procedure). The Panel will endeavour to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible without the need for further investigation.

Prior to the start of the Hearing the Panel will appoint a Chairman to preside at the Hearing. Decisions will normally be unanimous but if unanimity cannot be reached a simple majority will prevail. If there is an equality of votes, the Chairman shall have the casting vote.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and the manner in which it shall be presented. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision as to whether the complaint is justified and may make recommendations as to what action shall be taken. This could be to recommend that the HM reflect on and review the actions/decision taken or to uphold them. In appeals against sanctions, the panel may recommend that the sanction is appropriate and therefore upheld or that the HM reflect on and review the sanction with a view to either increasing or decreasing the sanction. If the Panel's decisions and recommendations, if any, are not made at the Hearing, the decision and recommendations, if any, shall be made within 3 working days of the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Chair of the Panel will write to the parent(s)/family, and where applicable the person complained about, informing them of its findings and recommendations, either by e-mail or in writing, as soon

as possible following the completion of the Hearing and in any event within 10 working days of it. Particulars of the complaint and the Panel's decision upon it will be reported to the Governing Body of the School no later than the meeting of that body which next follows the Hearing. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

Boarders and their parents may contact The Office of the Children's Commissioner regarding any complaint concerning their welfare. The person to contact is Anne Longfield, Telephone 0207 783 8330 email info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk or by post to Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. They may also contact ISI as the Inspectorate for boarding at Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC14 9HA tel 0207 600 0100 or concerns@isi.net

Early Years Foundation Stage parents: Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. If parents believe we are not meeting our EYFS requirements, they may make a complaint direct to Ofsted or ISI. The record of EYFS complaints is kept for at least three years.

Ofsted can be contacted at: Enquiries Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, online at http://live.Ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints_or_telephone_0300 123 1231. ISI can be contacted at: First Floor, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA, online at concerns@isi.net or telephone 0207 600 0100

Record of Complaints

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by para 32(3)(f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards)(England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them. On request Truro School will provide such a body with

- i. a written record of all complaints made during any specified period,
- ii. whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- iii. action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

It should be noted that if it was found that the standard had not been met because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on a complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard so that future complaints are dealt with properly,

The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure.

The number of complaints registered in 2017/18 academic year was four.

Complaints about the Headmaster – both Schools

In the event that the complaint is against the Head of the Prep School, the matter will be dealt with from Stage 2 of the process by writing direct to the Headmaster of the Senior School.

In the event that the complaint is against the Headmaster of the Senior School, the matter will be dealt with from Stage 2 of the process by writing to the Chair of Governors (address as above).

Thereafter, the same process, outlined above, will be followed with the Chair of Governors taking the place of the Headmaster.