



## **Longacre School Concerns and Complaints Policy**

**This policy includes the Early Years Foundation Stage**

***Policy Updated: September 2022***

***Policy to be reviewed: September 2023***

*This policy is published on the website and a copy can be obtained via the school office. It is available to staff on the Engage Portal.*

The policy applies to the whole school and to the Early Years Foundation Stage. There was one formal complaint registered during the academic year 2020/2021 and no complaints were registered for the academic year 2021/2022. Formal refers to a complaint proceeding at least to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

### **Introduction:**

As a matter of daily routine, the School receives numerous contacts from parents and other interested parties. Certain of these may raise concerns that are resolved simply by providing information or through the arrangement of an informal meeting. The procedure is likely to be concluded at this stage if the concern has been explained satisfactorily, or a shared understanding has been reached of the issue being raised. Where a matter is more serious, or an informal approach has failed to resolve the issue, it may then be raised, in writing, as a complaint. Under normal circumstances the school will not investigate anonymous complaints. Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage will be automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

### **Dealing with Concerns or Complaints:**

Longacre School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or pupils do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated seriously and sensitively by the School and in accordance with this Procedure.

If parents are in any doubt about whether a concern should be passed on, they should contact their child's Form Tutor in the first instance to discuss the matter.

### **Stage 1 (Informal):**

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

- If parents have a concern they should contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straight away and to the parents' satisfaction. However, if the Form Teacher alone cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with, or pass the matter to, the member of staff best placed to deal with the complaint. This may be a Head of Department or the Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher in consultation with the Director of Studies or Head of Pre-Prep unless the Deputy Head or Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.
- The teacher handling the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter either be unresolved within 5 school working days, or in the event of the Form Teacher and the parents failing to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- All communications between members of staff and the parents are recorded on a Parental Discussion Form. These are distributed to the relevant staff and Head and they are uploaded to the Pupil Profile on the School Management system and the Deputy Head holds a central record.

### **Stage 2 (Formal):**

- If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should put a formal complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the circumstances, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- The Head will meet with or speak to the parents concerned as soon possible and within five school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Deviation from the normal timescales may be necessary during school holiday periods due to staff and pupils being unavailable.

- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in seven working days. If more than seven working days are required to investigate then the Head will advise parents of this in writing before the allotted seven days have lapsed.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, noting at which stage resolution was achieved or if it proceeds to a panel hearing.
- Once the Head 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 the decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- The written decision should be issued within ten working days of the Head receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Head will write to the parents within the ten working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he is unable to issue his decision and informing the parents when he will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of the original receipt of the complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 (Formal – Panel Hearing):**

- If a complaint cannot be resolved at either Stage 1 or Stage 2 then Stage 3 may be invoked by parents. They should write to the Head informing him of their decision to do so within twenty-eight days of the Stage 2 decision, whereupon the matter will be referred to a named Governor appointed by the Board of Governors, to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Governors for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons appointed by the responsible Governor. The Panel members shall not have been directly involved previously in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of the Panel members shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The DfE's guidance on the identity of the independent panel member is 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.”*
- The responsible Governor will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within ten working days.

- The panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parent subsequently decides not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.
- 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 five working days prior to the Hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- However, should the Panel decide further investigation is required; such investigations should be carried out within ten working days.
- The Panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision. This procedure will take place within five working days of the hearing.
- The Panel's decision will then be sent in writing by post or by electronic mail to the parents, the Head, the Governors and where relevant, the person against whom the complaint was made. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the decision will be held on confidential file and be made available for inspection.

### **Arrangements for Record Keeping**

In accordance with Regulation Part 7, paragraph 33 (j), written records will be kept of all complaints, informal or formal, including whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or at a hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) for six years after the date of the resolution of the complaint. The written record of all complaints is reviewed regularly by the Head or a senior member of staff. Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.

The record will include:

- The date when the issue was raised;
- The name of the parent(s);
- The name of the pupil(s);

- A description of the issue;
- Records of all investigations (if appropriate);
- Witness statements (if appropriate);
- The name(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of telephone conversations);
- A clear account of what action was taken as a result of the complaint.

## **Confidentiality**

Except as required by law, the School and its staff shall not be required to divulge to the Parents or others any confidential information or the identities of pupils or others who have given information which has led to the complaint or which the Head has acquired during an investigation.

The correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential except in so far as where a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, or the Secretary of State, requests access to the records or other documents involved in the complaint.

The School may be required to declare the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the previous year to parents of pupils or prospective pupils and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or a body approved under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act.

Ofsted and/or ISI will, on request, be provided with a written record of all complaints made during a specific period and the action taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents may wish to raise their complaint with ISI on 020 7600 0100.

Parents of pupils in EYFS can also contact Ofsted on 08456 404040 or the Independent School's Inspectorate (ISI) on 020 7600 0100 at ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or to [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) to make a complaint should they so wish. The School will notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint and will provide Ofsted and ISI on request, a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
ISI	Independent School's Inspectorate