

Effingham Schools Trust Complaints Process

The Effingham Schools Trust provides a clear, transparent and professional process for dealing with complaints relating to its schools.

We aim to work collaboratively in partnership with parents, however, it is recognised that issues may arise which are not resolved to the satisfaction of parents, and that they will wish to make a formal complaint.

If parents or pupils do have a complaint, it will be treated in accordance with the procedures detailed below.

A complaint is a matter by which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. A copy of this procedure is available from the schools' websites and can also be requested at any time through the schools' receptions.

The days specified in this policy refer to days that the school is in "term time". Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Written complaints relating to the fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stages (EYFS) requirements must be investigated and complainants notified of the outcome within 28 days of having received the complaint. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted or ISI on request.

Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's teacher, tutor or boarding mistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher/tutor/boarding mistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult another member of the staff body.

Informal complaints made directly to the Heads or other members of senior staff will usually be referred to the relevant teacher/tutor/boarding mistress, unless it is deemed appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

If it is not resolved, it may be necessary to pass the issue to a member of the Senior Leadership/Management team. If the complaint concerns the child's Teacher or Head of Department the matter should be referred directly to the Deputy Head. Complaints made directly to the Senior Leadership teams/Management will usually be referred to the Head if they cannot be resolved satisfactorily.

The teacher/tutor/boarding mistress/ SLT/SMT will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days, or in the event that the teacher/tutor/boarding mistress/SLT and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to process with their complaint in accordance to Stage 2 of the procedure.

At this stage, an opportunity to talk informally to the Chair of Governors to resolve the issue is available.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In

most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned, **within five working school days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. Where possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations, in which case a definitive answer will be given within **10 further working days**.

The Head will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

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 in writing. The Head will also give reasons for their decision and indicate what action the school will take. At this stage a written record is required on whether the issue is resolved or whether it needs to proceed to a panel hearing. Written records will be kept in the Head's office securely, and it will be noted, whether the issue is resolved or moved to Stage 3.

If parents are still not satisfied with the resolution of the Head, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors. The Head will explain the process to the parents and will contact the Executive Director of the Effingham Schools Trust and the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors will call a hearing to the Conciliation Committee (Complaint Panel) and the Chair of Governors will select the members of the Committee.

The Conciliation Committee will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the school in question. The independent member should not only be outside the school's workforce, and not a member of the governing/proprietary body, but also should not be otherwise involved with the management of the school – for example, this might well be the case with a solicitor who regularly acts for a school. At least two Conciliation Committee members will be selected by the Chair of Governors from the following list;

1. Executive Director of Effingham Trust
2. Chair of Governors
3. A Senior Member of the Effingham Schools Trust
4. Member of Senior Leadership team
5. Member of the Governing Body

If any of these people have had prior direct involvement trying to resolve the complaint (e.g. contact with the parents), then they will be excluded from the Conciliation Committee. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. If the parent does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its Complaints Policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance.

The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge, on behalf of the Committee, the complaint, and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable but **within 10 school working days**. If the Committee 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 four working days prior to the hearing. If possible, the Committee will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Committee will decide how it should proceed.

After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Committee will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within **5 school working days** of the hearing. The Committee will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Committee will be final.

The Committee's findings, actions and recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Head and, where relevant, the person regarding whom the complaint was made. A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head, and also made available to Inspectors, on request. These documents are stored securely in the Head's office.

Complaints about the Head

In the event that parents have a complaint about the Head the three-step process above will apply. In the first instance, parents should seek informal resolution by speaking directly with the Head about their concerns (stage 1). If a resolution cannot be reached, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Executive Director of the Effingham School's Trust, who will conduct investigations as per Stage 2. If parents are still not satisfied, the matter will be referred to a Committee, as outlined in Stage 3.

Complaints about the Executive Director of the Effingham Schools Trust

In the event that parents have a complaint about the Executive Director the three-step process above will apply. In the first instance, parents should seek informal resolution by speaking directly with the Executive Director about their concerns (stage 1). If a resolution cannot be reached, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors, who will conduct investigations as per Stage 2. If parents are still not satisfied, the matter will be referred to a Committee, as outlined in Stage 3.

Recording of Complaints

All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are duly recorded in the Complaints Register, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result, regardless of whether they are upheld. The Stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded, whether at Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) or Stage 3 (Committee Hearing).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential; the exceptions to confidentiality are the Secretary of State and an inspection body under section 109 of the 2008 Act; where disclosure is required in for the school's inspections or where any other legal obligations prevails.

The School will provide OFSTED and ISI on request with a written record of any complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result.

Records of complaints will be retained for 7 years after findings have been made. If a complaint is regarding a Safeguarding issue the documentation will be kept for 10 years.

Repeat Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages the school will not investigate beyond the first instance.

Number of formal complaints 2023-2024:

St Teresa's: tbc

Cranmore: tbc

Information regarding the number of formal complaints received in the previous academic years are available by contacting the schools directly via the contact details on their website.

Contact details

OFSTED Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Education: 0300 123 4234 Other enquiries: 0300 123 1231	ISI Schools Inspectorate CAP House 9 – 12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA Tel: 020 7600 0100 Fax: 020 7776 8849
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Additional Arrangements If parents would like to contact Ofsted or ISI about failures to meet the EYFS requirements, please use the contact details above.

Policy Review

The Head of the schools will report to the governor body annually on the number and type of complaints received, and their outcomes. Complaints, which receive Stage 2 and beyond are recorded in the complaints register which is kept in the Heads office.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Heads, Director of Operations and Governors.

Lead: Director of Operations
 Approved by the Board of Governors 15 November 2024
 Next Review June 2025

Appendix One: Responsibilities

Effingham Schools Trust and the Governing Body

Responsible for:

- adopting the policy, procedures and guidelines;
- appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints, when complainants are not satisfied with the school's response;
- receiving reports and findings from the panel; or
- receiving reports from the Heads; advising the Heads

Chair of the Independent Committee

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties; and
- findings are communicated to the parent and school within five school working days of the hearing.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the school's response.

The Clerk must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record and minute the proceedings; and
- notify the parties of the decision.

Head of the Schools

Responsible for:

- the overall internal management of the procedures;
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request;
- hearing complaints at the second stage
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored, reviewed and regular reports made to the Governing body.
- produce an annual report for the full Governors meeting in June.

Senior Leadership/Management Teams

Responsible for:

- the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints; and
- keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedure;

Effingham Director of Finance and Director of Operations

Responsible for

- environmental and financial complaints

Heads of Department

Responsible for

- dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.

Form Tutors/Boarding Staff/Heads of Year, Head of Upper Prep, Head of Lower Prep, Class Teacher:

Responsible for

- dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

Designated Safeguarding Lead(s):

Responsible for

- dealing with any child protection issues.

All Staff:

Responsible for

- hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff; and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns; and for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Senior Leadership/Management team.