

**ELMHURST SCHOOL**  
**School Complaints Policy and Procedure**

***[Note: In the academic year 2009-10 there were no complaints involving the formal complaints procedure. This includes the full age-range of the School, including EYFS]***

**For Students:**

Problems are always best dealt with quickly and directly. Boys should first be encouraged to approach the relevant teacher, explaining the concern reasonably, so that an attempt or strategy can be made to resolve it.

If they feel embarrassed, feel it is difficult to meet with that teacher directly, or do not have the matter resolved to their satisfaction, they can choose to report the situation to any of the following options:

- The class teacher
- The Head of Lower School, Head of Upper School or Deputy Head
- The Head
- Parents (so that they might follow the procedures below)

It is important that the children choose someone they think they can trust.

**For Parents:**

Differences of opinion, or lack of information, can occur in all organisations. It is the right of an individual to have his/her voice heard. If you have comments/concerns about anything, then please tell us. Do not be afraid that our relationship with you or your son will be necessarily affected if you express dissatisfaction, so long as that is done reasonably and according to the following procedures.

Elmhurst School will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, within three working days at least, and fully investigate the matter. If there is any delay, Elmhurst School will advise the parent/carers of this and offer an explanation. The Head will be responsible for a full and formal response to the complaint within 28 working days of having received the complaint (including EYFS). A record of any complaints will be kept for at least three years.

**FIRST STAGE**

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly [it is often difficult for us to properly investigate an incident which happened some time ago]. Concerns should initially be brought to the attention of the class teacher or member of staff responsible for the area or action that concerned you. Most concerns can be sorted out quite quickly and satisfactorily in this informal way. If your concern is more serious, or approaching the member of staff directly would make you feel uncomfortable, you might contact the relevant Head of Department (the office staff can help you out here), the Head of Lower School, the Head of Upper School, the Deputy Head or make an appointment to discuss it with the Head, if you feel it is appropriate to be looked at by him in the first instance.

Whoever you approach we will make every effort to listen to and hopefully resolve your problem promptly, at this first, informal, stage.

Indeed, most potential complaints can best be resolved through such informal discussion with the right person. That does not mean we will always agree with your point of view but it will help both you and us to understand better both sides of the question, or matter. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising in the future.

Please be aware, though, that it is not always possible to come into school without a prior appointment and expect the teacher to 'drop everything' and stop supervising children to give you undivided, immediate attention. To avoid disappointment please book in an appointment through the school office.

Whoever you approach will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved or you fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then we will advise you to proceed with your complaint in accordance with the second stage of this procedure.

## **SECOND STAGE**

If you have approached one of the members of staff mentioned above and you are not satisfied with the response, then you may wish to meet with the Head informally, or put your concerns in writing. At this time you should make it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with formally.

If this is so, your concern becomes a complaint.

The Head will fully investigate the complaint, keeping written records of all meetings and interviews, and may interview any members of staff and pupils involved.

Up to this point your concern would have been treated in confidence, if you had expressed that it should be. However, in the interests of natural justice the person about whom the complaint is alleged must now have the opportunity to hear all the details about that complaint and reply to the allegations.

The Head would then provide a written response in the form of a full report of his investigations.

This report/response will be compiled as soon as possible after the matter has, in the Head's opinion, been sufficiently explored. You may not receive an immediate reply, sometimes key witnesses are absent, but please be patient. Certainly it will be within a week of receiving the complaint and, in most cases, the next day.

## **THIRD STAGE**

If you are not satisfied with the Head's response, further discussion can be arranged. If you still do not accept that, do not want it, or indeed if your complaint is about the Head himself and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, you may wish to take the matter up with the Principal of the School. You can request this by telephone or in writing via the school contact details.

If you have removed your son from the school and have expressed, in meetings or correspondence, any views, opinions or interpretation of events which have not been accepted by the school, either in meetings or correspondence, it may be deemed that no useful purpose can be achieved by holding a meeting. If your son is still a pupil at Elmhurst School, or if, having left, the Principal feels that a meeting would be beneficial, this will be arranged.

The Principal will then listen to, and investigate your complaint and, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion – initially with or without the Head, at your request.

At the end of this stage the Principal will provide you with a written response, unless the discussion has concluded satisfactorily enough for you to deem that unnecessary.

## **FOURTH STAGE**

If you are not satisfied with the Principal's response, or indeed if your complaint is about the Principal himself and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, you may request that an independent committee reviews the whole proceedings. The committee will be appointed by the Principal and will consist of three people, ideally with some connection to education, the law or senior management [but not employees of Elmhurst School] who have volunteered and are available. They would have had no previous knowledge of the complaint, up to this point, and will be independent of the management and running of the school.

You will now need to put your complaint fully in writing to them (the school will inform you of contact addresses) and the committee will also be given all correspondence relating to that complaint.

A meeting will then be convened, with you, the Head and/or the Principal and the independent committee, depending upon the availability of all concerned. This will take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days. You may be accompanied by a friend or representative if you wish. The same privilege would apply to the Principal and/or Head, if they so wished.

After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing within 10 school days and the reasons for the decision. The findings, as well as any recommendations of the panel, will be

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sent by electronic mail or otherwise sent to the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about. They will also be sent to the Principal and Head.

Parents should be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003, by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal authority.

The decision of the committee would normally be the last step in the complaints process.

### **For Members of Staff:**

Staff members who wish to express a concern, or complain, **about another staff member**, should first contact the person most likely to be able to provide a quick and satisfactory response. In the first instance this is likely to be either the Head of the Department to which the member of staff, they are concerned about, belongs - or, indeed, to the Head.

If this concern becomes a formal complaint it will follow the procedures above up to and including a meeting with the Head.

However, an independent committee would not normally be used in this instance.

Parents have the opportunity to contact Ofsted and ISI using the following addresses: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or [durell.barnes@isi.net](mailto:durell.barnes@isi.net) to provide details of their complaint should they so wish. In addition, the school should provide Ofsted and ISI on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result.