

OLD VICARAGE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Old Vicarage School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. We recognise that, from time to time, parents may have concerns on various issues and we would encourage you to bring these to us so that we can allay them. However, if parents do have a complaint relating to the Old Vicarage School which they wish to be dealt with, they can expect it to be handled in accordance with the following procedure, which is based on the model recommended for use by independent schools.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously;
- we take action where appropriate.

“How should I complain?”

You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. Please be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. Any member of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. They may be able to sort things out quickly. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Deputy Head/Director of Studies or the Headmaster.

“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.”

The Old Vicarage School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Please contact a member of staff, as described above.

“I am not sure whether to complain or not.”

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to complain. If in doubt, you should contact the school as we are here to help.

Statement of Policy on Dealing with Complaints

The Old Vicarage School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and in all cases we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

We believe that all complaints which we receive should be treated seriously and investigated fully and fairly. The School will always try to resolve complaints informally and in an amicable fashion where possible. The School’s Complaints Procedure is divided into Informal, Formal and Appeal Stages. It is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved quickly at the Informal Stage. Complaints will be dealt with on as confidential a basis as possible, but it may be necessary for the person who first receives a complaint to discuss it with those who can resolve it, so anonymity and total confidence cannot be guaranteed. No-one will receive adverse treatment as a result of having a complaint or because someone else has raised a complaint on their behalf.

The Complaints Procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints in the *Complaints File*, including whether they are resolved at preliminary stage or whether they proceed to a panel hearing.

The Headmaster will ensure that correspondence, statements and records of complaint are kept confidential except in so far as provided in paragraph 6(2)(j) of the *Education Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003 of the Education Act 2002*. In situations concerning alleged abuse the Child Protection Procedures take precedence over the following complaints procedure.

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All complaints will be recorded and dated in the Complaints File. If appropriate an Accident or Incident Report will also be completed. After a complaint has been resolved the final outcome will be written in the Complaints File. Any recommendation for changes in procedure will be made and noted against the Complaints Policy.

Summary of Procedure for Those Wishing to Complain *(Including Parents, Children and Voluntary Helpers)*

Stage One: Informal Stage of Complaints Procedure

- If a parent, child or voluntary helper wishes to make a complaint, they should usually contact the member of staff concerned in the first instance. Many concerns arise from misunderstandings and can be resolved by simple clarification.
- Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headmaster. The Headmaster considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.
- The member of staff will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 days or in the event that a satisfactory resolution is not reached then the complainant will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- Should a parent have a complaint about the Headmaster, s/he should first make an informal approach to the Headmaster, who is obliged to investigate it. The Headmaster will do all he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, then a formal complaint can be made as, as outlined below.

Stage Two: Formal Stage of Complaints Procedure

- More serious complaints and complaints which it has not been possible to resolve informally should be addressed in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Where the parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint made as above, the school has an established procedure for the complaint to be made in writing.
- All formal complaints which are received by the school will be recorded in a log book which will contain the date of the complaint, a brief outline of it, a summary of the steps taken to resolve it and the outcome.
- The person making the complaint will also be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation, although details of any action which may result in the use of disciplinary or other formal procedures will normally remain confidential.

Stage Three: Appeals Stage of Complaints Procedure

- Where the parents are not satisfied in response to their written complaint, the Proprietor has made provision for a hearing before a panel of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Where there is a panel hearing for dealing with the complaint, one person will be independent of the management and the running of the school.

The Proprietor will be responsible for the appointment of the panel and the complaints procedure has the following clear time scales for the management of the complaint.

- The panel will hear the complaint within ten working days and will give a written reply within five working days after having met.
- The parents may attend and be accompanied at the panel hearing if they wish.
- The panel will make recommendations, a copy of which shall be given to the Complainant, the Headmaster, the Proprietor and, where relevant, the person complained about.

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- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may take recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, Trustees and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(i) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

All parents have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

Monitoring and review

- The Headmaster monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headmaster logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. They examine this log on an annual basis.
- The Proprietor takes into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any necessary modifications to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Signed.....

Date.....September 2008

To be reviewed by.....September 2009