



HEREFORD CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

This policy applies to all parents of pupils (including boarders) currently in the senior section of Hereford Cathedral School. This policy does not apply to parents of past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School. There is a similar but separate policy for the Junior School to include those pupils in our EYFS settings.

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that the staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the School has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. A copy of this policy is available from the School Office on request. The policy is also available on the school website (www.herefordcs.com).

Our 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 would hope to deal with the majority of concerns in an informal way, but proper procedures are in place if a formal complaint is made.

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.

The Complaints Process

STAGE 1: MAKING AN INFORMAL COMPLAINT

When parents have concerns they should always contact their child's Tutor in the first instance. The Tutor will, if appropriate, involve other members of staff such as subject teachers, Heads of Department, the Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If parents feel that a concern is of a more serious nature, they may contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headmaster to make an informal complaint. Such would be considered very seriously and investigated in each case thoroughly. A record of all informal complaints and the date on which they were received is made. Following consultation with other members of staff as necessary, feedback will be provided to the

complainant and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the area of concern, along with information regarding any measures that the School intends to take in response. All informal complaints should be handled within a time scale that is reasonable, and within two working (i.e. term time) weeks. However, outside of term time the time scale for response may be longer and parents will be informed of when they can expect a response; the School will endeavour to respond as quickly as is reasonably possible. In the event that a satisfactory resolution is not reached, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

STAGE 2: MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Should parents not be satisfied with the outcome of this informal process, they should complain formally in writing to the Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School, clearly stating that a formal complaint is being made. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

During term time, the complaint should be acknowledged within one working week and a response made within two working weeks.

In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within seven working 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.

Outside of term time the time scale for response may be longer and parents will be informed of when they can expect a response; the Headmaster will endeavour to respond as quickly as is reasonably possible.

The Headmaster will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. 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. The Headmaster will give written reasons for the decision and explain the right to proceed to Stage 3 and what that entails.

STAGE 3: APPEALS COMMITTEE HEARING

Should a matter not be resolved through both informal and formal procedures, your complaint may be renewed in writing to the Clerk of Governors within five working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2 above. Your letter should give full details of your complaint and enclose all relevant documents and your full contact details. Your letter will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within four working school days during term time. During holidays an acknowledgement will be provided as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The Clerk of Governors will convene a panel of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters that are subject to complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. A hearing will be held as soon as practicable and within fourteen (term time) days of the Clerk of Governor's acknowledgement, although outside of term time this may be longer, in which case parents will be informed of when they can expect a response; the School will endeavour to respond as quickly as is

reasonably possible. Parents will be entitled to attend, accompanied, if they wish, by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate (Parents do not have the right to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing, although the school can allow this if it wishes).

The parents' right to request and attend a panel is not forfeit because they have initiated legal proceedings, or indicated that they might do so. Should the parents choose not to attend the panel hearing, the School will still hold the hearing and continue to follow this complaints policy. The panel will conduct a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a judicial review style check that process was followed. The findings, and recommendations, if any, will be made available in writing to the parents and available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and Head, and where relevant the person complained about within 28 days.

The decision of the panel will be final. If repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

1. RECORD KEEPING

Written records will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will be kept of any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether or not they are upheld). Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head and/or members of the Senior Leadership Team as appropriate and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties, outside the School, aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it becomes necessary to refer matters to the police. Parents/guardians/carers would be fully informed in such circumstances.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, anonymous complaints may not be pursued. Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of a complaint will be handled confidentially within the School.

Parents may request information on the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. There were three complaints registered under our formal procedure during the academic year 2021/22. No formal complaints were registered under our formal procedure during the academic year 2022/23.

Reviewed by MEPG
March 2024