

33a COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

*A copy of this policy is published in the following areas:
The school's website*

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A. Complaints Overview

A1. Definition

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem or a matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks responsive action. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department, process, or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly. Should we suspect that a complaint raises an issue where a member of staff has caused actual or potential harm to pupils then this will be treated as an allegation against the member of staff under the Disciplinary Policy and will be looked at under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

A2. General approach

Truro School has long prided itself on the quality of the education provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Truro School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents and guardians of pupils on the school's website and from the school office. Truro School will ensure that parents or guardians of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. Reference to 'parents' in this policy henceforth includes guardians.

Truro School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and will always take seriously any complaint that might be raised.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be adversely affected by a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially within the School.

All sections of this policy apply to the parents, carers or guardians of boarders and day pupils. If a parent has a complaint about boarding they should follow this procedure but clearly state that the complaint is about boarding.

The complaints policy does not apply to prospective pupils, and the school's failure to admit them, nor does it cover complaints from parents of pupils who have left (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still registered with and being educated at the school). Similarly, the complaints policy does not cover appeals regarding public examination grades because a separate appeals process exists for this purpose in line with guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

Anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

A3. Pupil Concerns

Pupil concerns are listened to and taken seriously, but are not managed under the terms of this complaints policy, which does not, then, apply to pupils, whether day or boarders. Truro School is committed to involving pupils in decision-making and finding out their views on all aspects of school life, including boarding.

Pupils can raise concerns and issues with their school tutors, with Heads of Year, nurses, the Chaplain, school prefects, Student Council, Deputy Head (Pastoral), the Head or any other member of staff.

In addition to the above, Boarders can give feedback to any member of staff, at a House Council, at a House Meeting in the suggestions book, and the annual boarders' questionnaire. They are encouraged to raise concerns and issues with boarding staff, boarding prefects and the independent listener.

All pupils' views will be also sought from time to time in other surveys as commissioned by the school.

B. Complaints Procedures

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution via a Senior Leader

It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally without recourse to Stages 1,2, or 3 of this policy.

If a parent has a concern they should normally contact their child's Class Teacher, Form Tutor, or Head of Year or Housemaster/Housemistress. In most cases, the matter will be resolved in this way to the satisfaction of parents. Where necessary members of the leadership or non-teaching staff teams will be consulted to support this process. If a concern is brought forward during the holidays, it will be recorded and forwarded to a senior member of staff. Concerns made directly to a member of the leadership team will usually be referred to the relevant staff member to deal with unless the member of the leadership team deems it appropriate to deal with the matter themselves.

In the Senior School:

If a parental concern has not been resolved in this way, parents will be advised to raise it into a Stage 1 complaint. Stage 1 complaints should be made directly to a member of the leadership team, including, if appropriate, the Business Director and will usually be dealt with by a member of the leadership team. Parents should put their complaint in writing, setting out the precise nature of their complaint, and the outcome they would like to achieve. The Head may be copied into this email but if so, will normally delegate the management of a Stage 1 Complaint to a member of the leadership team.

The relevant leadership team member will make a written record of all complaints, including the date on which they were received, the conclusions reached, and how the matter was resolved. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the staff member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution at Stage 1, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy.

In the Prep School:

If parents have a concern they should normally contact their child's Class Teacher in the first instance and then the EYFS Coordinator (for pupils in Nursery and Reception), the Key Stage 1 Coordinator (for pupils in Years 1 and 2), the Assistant Head (Pastoral) (for pupils in Years 3-6 concerning a

pastoral matter) and the Assistant Head (Academic) (for pupils in Years 3-6 concerning an academic matter). Where relevant, handling of the concern may involve members of the non-teaching staff too.

If a parental concern has not been resolved in this way, parents will be advised to raise it to a Stage 1 complaint. A Stage 1 complaint should be made directly to the Head of Prep, who will either refer the complaint to the most relevant member of senior staff, or seek to resolve it directly in dialogue with parents. Parents should put their complaint in writing, setting out the precise nature of their complaint, and the outcome they would like to achieve. A written record will be kept of all complaints made, including the date on which they were received, the conclusions reached, and how the matter was resolved. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the parents are unsatisfied with the outcome, they will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution via the Head – for both schools

If the complaint cannot be resolved under Stage 1 and a parent wishes to escalate it to Stage 2, then the parent is expected to put their complaint in writing to the Head, setting out the precise nature of their complaint, outlining any evidence upon which they intend to rely, and the outcome they would like to achieve. This appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of the date of the School's decision made under Stage 1 being communicated to the parent. Parents should expect an acknowledgement within 3 working days and the Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the Head will offer to meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 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 Head to carry out further investigations. They may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and parents may therefore be asked to meet for a further discussion. Parents may take a friend or relative to this meeting. The investigating member of staff may also carry out a full investigation of the complaint and may interview staff and other pupils involved. A written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept.

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 this decision in writing, normally within 10 working days (or longer by agreement) of the Stage 2 Complaint being acknowledged, though a response may exceed 10 days during holiday time. The Head will also give reasons for their decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing – for both schools

If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved as described in Stage 2 above, then the parent should put their complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Governors, for the attention of the Chair of Governors. (Chair of Governors, c/o Clerk to the Governors, Truro School, Trennick Lane, Truro, TR1 1TH or rb@truroschoo.com) requesting a Panel Hearing. This appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of the date of the School's decision made under Stage 2 being communicated to the parent. The complainant should provide a list of any complaint(s) made against the School which they believe have not been satisfactorily resolved by the Stage 2 procedure and also state whether they wish to attend the hearing, to which they may bring a family member if desired, or whether the Panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions.

A panel hearing will go ahead unless the complainant later indicates they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. A panel hearing will, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the complainant may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel will consider the complaint in the absence of the complainant and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure will also be used for any appeals against permanent exclusions imposed by the Head under the Behaviour Policy. Please note as a result of an appeal, a permanent exclusion may be upheld, or amended by the panel.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one person will be independent of the management and running of the School and the remainder will normally be School Governors. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair, who, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint via the Clerk to the Governors and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days. For the purpose of this policy working days are weekdays Monday to Friday during term time. The response time may exceed this out of term time.

Prior to the start of the Hearing, the Panel will appoint a Chair to preside at the Hearing. 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 3 working days prior to the hearing. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and the manner in which it shall be presented. The parent(s)/family may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. The parent does not have a right to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing. The Head will normally also attend the hearing and may bring a colleague (normally the senior member of staff who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 of this procedure).

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision as to whether the complaint is justified and may make recommendations as to what action shall be taken. This could be to recommend that the Head reflect on and review the actions/decisions taken or to uphold them. If the Panel's decisions and recommendations, if any, are not made at the Hearing, the decision and recommendations, if any, shall be made within 10 working days of the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. No further information will be considered post panel hearing and the decision will be made on the basis of that submitted.

Decisions will normally be unanimous but if unanimity cannot be reached a simple majority will prevail. If there is an equality of votes, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

The Chair of the Panel will write to the parent(s)/family, and where applicable the person complained about, informing them of its findings and recommendations, either by e-mail or in writing, as soon as possible following the completion of the Hearing and in any event within 10 working days of it. Particulars of the complaint and the Panel's decision upon it will be reported to the Governing Body of the School no later than the meeting of that body which next follows the Hearing. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Early Years Foundation Stage parents: Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. If parents believe we are not meeting our EYFS requirements, they may also make a complaint direct to Ofsted or ISI. The record of EYFS complaints is kept for at least three years.

Ofsted can be contacted at: Enquiries Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, online at <http://live.Ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints> or telephone 0300 123 1231. ISI can be contacted at: First Floor, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA, online at concerns@isi.net or telephone 0207 600 0100

Record of Complaints

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential

except to the extent required by para 32(3)(f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them. On request Truro School will provide such a body with

- i. a written record of all complaints made under Stage 2 of the procedure during any specified period,
- ii. whether they are resolved following Stage 2 procedure or proceed to a Stage 3 panel hearing; and
- iii. action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

It should be noted that if it was found that the standard had not been met because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on a complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard so that future complaints are dealt with properly.

The written record of complaints is limited to all those made under the formal part of the procedure, and is reviewed annually by the School leadership team to inform school development.

The number of complaints registered under Stages 2 and 3 of this policy in the previous academic year can be provided at request from the Head's office (head@truroschoo.com).

Complaints about the Head – both Schools

In the event that the complaint is against the Head of the Prep School, the matter will be dealt with from Stage 2 of the process by writing direct to the Head of Truro School.

In the event that the complaint is against the Head of Truro School, the matter will be dealt with from Stage 2 of the process by writing to the Chair of Governors (address as above).

Thereafter, the same process, outlined above, will be followed with the Chair of Governors taking the place of the Head.