



Newland House School

Complaints Policy

Updated	February 2024
Updated by	Deputy Head (Prep) Deputy Head (Pre-Prep)
Authorised by	Chris Skelton, Head

This Policy applies to all sections of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Newland House School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint, we will:
- Deal with complaints promptly,
 - Resolve a complaint by informal means if at all possible.
 - Deal with a complaint with sensitivity and maintain confidentiality at all times,
 - Remain impartial
 - Ensure that a thorough investigation is carried out of all matters giving rise to the complaint and provide appropriate redress, where necessary.
- 1.2 Initial concerns by parents will be taken seriously and parents are encouraged to speak with their child's form or subject teacher in the first instance as soon as an issue is of concern to them. Staff will try and resolve issues.

2. Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- 2.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 2.2 If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's form teacher or subject teacher. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straight away and to the parents' satisfaction. However, if the form teacher or subject teacher alone cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Year (for pastoral matters) or the Head of Department (for academic matters in the Prep part of the school). If needed, this may be followed up with the Deputy Head (Prep) or the Deputy Head (Pre-Prep) for pastoral matters or the Deputy Head (Academic) for academic matters.
- 2.3 Complaints made directly to a Deputy Head or Head will usually be referred to the relevant form/subject teacher or Head of Year/Department unless the Deputy Head or Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- 2.4 If the concern or complaint is made in writing, it will be acknowledged by telephone or email within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as is reasonably practicable in school holidays.
- 2.5 Should the matter either be unresolved within ten school days, or 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.
- 2.6 Written complaints about the fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements will be investigated and the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the initial complaint.

3. Stage 2 – Formal resolution

- 3.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. He will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 3.2 If the complaint is about the Head, it should be made to the Board of Governors who will follow this procedure to resolve the issue. If the complaint is about any member of the Senior Leadership Team¹ (SLT) it should be made to the Head.
- 3.3 In most cases, the Head² will meet or phone the parents concerned, **within ten school days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 3.4 It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations and these will begin as soon as possible.
- 3.5 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. The Head will also give reasons for this decision.
- 3.6 The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 3.7 If a complaint is received within a month of the end of term, it is possible that it may not be resolved to the timescales above due to the unavailability of personnel during school holidays. Every effort will be made to resolve issues at the earliest possible time.
- 3.8 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should request a panel hearing as set out in Stage 3 of this Procedure.

4. Stage 3 – Panel hearing

- 4.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who has been appointed to call hearings of the Governors.
- 4.2 The matter will then be referred to the Governors for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. DFE guidance states:

Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and we are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable.

Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.

*Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and **within twenty school days**.*

- 4.3 If necessary, the panel may require 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 two weeks prior to the hearing.
- 4.4 The parent may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 4.5 If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 4.6 Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all relevant facts the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which shall be completed within ten school 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 Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint. Copies of the written decision will be kept for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and the Head.
- 4.7 It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head or the Governing Body.

5. Recording of complaints

- 5.1 A written record will be kept in the school of all formal complaints and whether they have been resolved at that stage or if they proceeded to the panel hearing.
- 5.2 Written records are not always kept of informal complaints or parents' concerns. However, most parents will contact the Form Teacher or a senior member of the school by email and all email trails leading to the resolution are kept.
- 5.3 Informal complaints and minor concerns are discussed by the SLT and also at weekly staff meetings in order to help monitor if there are any patterns of concern.

- 5.4 All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 5.5 A record will be kept for at least three years. For EYFS the record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- 5.6 There have been no formal complaints (level 2) in the last 12 months.

6. Further information

- 6.1 The school is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), an independent organisation which reports to the Government on schools. Parents have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning the pupil's welfare. ISI will usually expect parents or pupils to have followed the schools formal complaints procedure before contacting them.
- 6.2 Parents will be notified about an inspection once the school has been informed and the final inspection report will be provided to them.
- 6.3 Information about how to contact ISI can be found at www.isi.net.
- 6.4 Alternatively, a complainant may wish to contact OFSTED and details can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk if the complaint is about the EYFS provision.
- 6.5 This policy will be reviewed every academic year or sooner if changes to legislation, compliance requirements or good practice dictate.