



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Introduction

Notre Dame School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Notre Dame School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day.

In accordance with paragraph 32(3)(f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Notre Dame School will make available to parents of pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department 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 so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Written complaints regarding the fulfilment (not provision) of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The School will make available the details of how to contact ISI/ OFSTED.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

### Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint.

## **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's Class/ Form teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, Head of Year, the Deputy Head or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/Head of Year will usually be referred to the relevant Class/ Form teacher unless the Head of Department deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Class/ Form teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the Form teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to 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.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

## **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing (cont)**

- 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 2 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents 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.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. 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 make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 days of the Hearing. The Panel does not have the power to: terminate the contract with parents; discipline or dismiss a member of staff; make compensatory awards or make refunds of fees.
- 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 recommendations (if any) will be sent in writing by electronic mail or otherwise to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person of which the complaint was made. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available on school premises for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher.

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 penalised for a complaint that is raised in good faith.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; by the Secretary of State where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

### **EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)**

Notre Dame School will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints relating to the requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish regarding the EYFS service provision. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

Parents may also complain to ISI if they wish regarding the EYFS service provision. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

**P J Brown**  
**Clerk to the Governors**

**2015-16**

**Number of Stage 2 complaints:**

**Senior school 3 (all resolved)**

**Prep school 1 (resolved)**

**Number of Stage 3 complaints:**

**Senior school 0**

**Prep school 0**