



Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

The Cedars prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its boys. 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.

The Cedars School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of boys (and of prospective boys) on the School's website and in the School office during the School day, and The Cedars School will ensure that parents of boys (and of prospective boys) who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, The Cedars School will make available to parents of boys and of prospective boys and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

What is 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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your son and you can be assured that your son will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your son raises in good faith.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Parents with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, to telephone, or to write with details of the issue that concerns them. In the first instance, it may be best to address a concern to the member of staff most closely involved in the matter at issue (such as the relevant teacher or tutor), who may well be able to resolve the problem quickly: but there may be some concerns which parents prefer to bring directly to the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster.

Receiving a complaint

Any complaint will receive a prompt response: either by immediate discussion (and, it is hoped, resolution) in person or by telephone, or, if wider consultation and/or investigation is required, by letter as soon as possible setting out the conclusion of the inquiry, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed. If such action includes use of the staff disciplinary procedures, this will be handled confidentially within the School.

The member of staff receiving a complaint will make a written record of it using the form provided and pass it to the Headmaster or the Deputy Headmaster. This record will be kept by the Headmaster and will be periodically monitored. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days, or in the event that the member of staff 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 as detailed below.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be observed as far as is consistent with proper investigation and effective handling of a complaint. It is School policy that the voicing of a concern or the making of a complaint by a parent should not in any way rebound adversely on their son.

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 Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet with the parents concerned, normally within 14 days of receiving the complaint (during term-time), to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.

The Headmaster will keep written records 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 also give reasons for his decision. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to give its decision within 28 days of the complaint being made if the complaint is lodged during term-time, and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure and lodge an appeal; this appeal must be lodged within 14 days of the Headmaster's decision.

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 Appeal Panel as described below. The Appeal Panel will consist of two Governors, neither of whom will have had previous involvement in the Headmaster's decision or in the matters subject to complaint, and a third person, independent of the management and governance of the School.

Notice of the complaint or appeal must be sent in writing to the Cedars Director at the address below, setting out fully all the reasons for making the complaint or contesting the

Headmaster's decision. Included should be any documents or other evidence or details of witness to fact or character on which the parents intend to rely. The Cedars Director will inform the Headmaster that an appeal has been lodged, communicate with the appellant(s), collect together all the relevant papers and make the necessary arrangements for the appeal hearing. The Headmaster's response to the appellant(s) will be included in the papers to be provided to the latter. The hearing must take place within 21 days from the notice of appeal being received, unless otherwise agreed between the School and the appellant(s). The appellant(s) has the right to attend in person to make oral representations and should inform the Cedars Director in writing of his request to attend within 5 days of the notification of the date of the hearing. The notification will contain instructions in respect of attendance. If no such request is made, the Appeal Panel will determine the appeal on the written submissions only.

The Cedars Director will give the Headmaster and the appellant(s) not less than seven days' notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing and whether it is to be determined by oral hearing or on the basis of written submissions, depending on the response of the appellant(s).

In the case of an oral appeal hearing the following shall apply:

- The appeal hearing shall be in private, and everything said at the appeal hearing shall be confidential.
- Neither the parents nor the Headmaster will be entitled to put before the Appeal Panel any document or other evidence which did not accompany the notice of appeal or the Headmaster's response or was not provided to the Appeal Panel and the other party at least 7 days before the hearing date unless the Appeal Panel shall determine otherwise.
- The appellant(s) and the Headmaster may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person whose details must be provided in advance to the Cedars Director, together with a statement of the capacity in which they are attending. This may be a relative, teacher or friend, but legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Such person must undertake to respect the confidentiality of the appeal and shall not have the right to address the appeal hearing, unless expressly invited by the Panel.
- The Headmaster or appellant(s) must inform the Cedars Director in advance if they wish to call any witness to give evidence before the Appeal Panel detailing the person they wish to attend, the purpose, and the role that person is expected to play.
- The appellant(s) will first set out their case, the Headmaster will respond, and the appellant(s) will have the opportunity to reply to any new material raised by the Headmaster before the Appeal Panel retires to consider and make its decision.
- Within 7 days of the appeal hearing, whether that hearing is oral or based solely on written evidence, the Cedars Director will write to the appellant(s), the Headmaster and, where relevant, the person complained about, setting out the decision of the Panel, the reasons for that decision, and any recommendations made. The findings of the Appeal Panel will be made available on the School premises for inspection by the Headmaster and the Governors. The Appeal Panel's decision shall be final and not subject to further appeal. A statement to this effect will be contained within the letter detailing the decision of the Panel.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 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 2 stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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.

Written records

The School will keep a written record of all complaints including whether they were resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing, and detailing any action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept.

Other considerations

Parents can be assured that 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, or where disclosure is required under other legal authority. Parents may request the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year; this information is held by the Headmaster.

The correspondence address for the Cedars Director is

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This policy will be reviewed every 2 years

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