

# PRIOR'S FIELD SCHOOL

## GODALMING SURREY

GSA BSA Girls' Boarding and Day 11-18

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Parents and prospective parents may request the number of formal complaints received in the previous school year from the Head's PA.

*This policy was updated in the light of changes to the Regulatory Requirements of Independent Schools in 2009*

#### **Introduction**

Prior's Field School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or pupils do have a complaint [other than in relation to a disciplinary matter which is the subject matter of a separate Procedure] they can expect it to be treated very seriously by the School and in accordance with this Procedure.

#### **What constitutes a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of genuine dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example:

- ◆ Done something wrong
- ◆ Failed to do something it should have done
- ◆ Acted unfairly

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department in the school or about an individual member of staff.

#### **Dealing with complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. Parents can be reassured that we listen to them and take complaints seriously.

*If you are in any doubt about whether a complaint should be passed on, please do contact either your daughter's Form Tutor, Head of Year, or Housemistress in the first instance to discuss the matter.*

#### **Recording complaints**

A written record of all concerns and complaints will be made and, where applicable, may include the following information:

- ◆ Date when the issue was raised
- ◆ Name of parent
- ◆ Name of pupil
- ◆ Brief statement of issue
- ◆ Location of file
- ◆ Staff member handling the issue
- ◆ Brief statement of outcome

#### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- ◆ It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- ◆ All members of staff are encouraged to deal with a parental concern that lies within their area of responsibility. However, if parents or girls have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's Form Tutor or a Head of Department. If it is a boarding issue they may prefer to contact the Housemistress. In most cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means and to the parents' or pupils' satisfaction.
- ◆ In the case of a complaint being made to a member of staff that lies outside their remit, they will refer it to the appropriate person having informed the parents that they will be doing so.
- If the person contacted initially is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the most appropriate senior member of staff i.e. the Head of Year, Head of Boarding, Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Deputy Head (Curriculum).
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Deputy Head OR Head of Boarding, unless the recipient deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The relevant Deputy Head or Head of Boarding 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 **10 working days** or in the event that the Head of Year or Head of Boarding and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents or pupils 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 or girls should put their complaint in writing in a letter to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head will contact the parents or pupils concerned within **7 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, noting at which stage resolution was achieved.
- 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 or pupils will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will give reasons for her decision.
- If parents or pupils are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents or pupils seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should advise the Head accordingly and she will then refer the matter to a Governor appointed by the Board of Governors to be responsible for the handling of complaints at this Stage.
- The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons appointed by the responsible Governor. The Panel members shall not have been directly involved previously in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of the Panel members shall be independent of the management and

running of the School. The responsible Governor will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable though not exceeding 28 days of receiving the referral.

- 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 days prior to the Hearing.
- The parents or pupils 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' or pupils' 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 shall within 7 days of the Hearing reach a decision. The Panel's findings and if appropriate, any recommendations will then be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and where relevant, the person against whom the complaint was made.
- The decision of the panel will be final and binding on all parties

### **Related Issues**

Parents or pupils can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State, or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 and paragraph 6(2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003: where disclosure is required in the course of the schools inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that 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.

Complaints are handled in compliance with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, whereby the policy is made available to all staff, boarders and parents. Parents can contact Ofsted directly on 08456 014772 or [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or Surrey Social Services (Tel: 0808 1000 900). However, it is hoped that complaints will be pursued through the process set out above in the first instance.

**Date of next review: Autumn 2010**