



## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS**

Geneva English School aims to provide an excellent learning environment and high quality pastoral care for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. Complaints relating to safeguarding or health and safety issues will be dealt with as a priority. For the purposes of this procedure, concerns and complaints are treated equally and are all referred to as complaints.

### **STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's class teacher (GES Primary) or tutor (GES Secondary). They may do so in person, by telephone or in writing (email or letter). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher or tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Upper School & School Transfer, Head of Pastoral Care & Lower School, Deputy Head (GES Primary) or Assistant Head (GES Secondary).

Complaints made directly to a member of the senior leadership team will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the senior leader concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

If the complaint is received in person or by telephone, the member of staff dealing with the complaint will make a dated, written record. If the complaint is made in writing, it will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within two working days of receipt during term time, and as soon as practicable during the holidays.

Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days, or in the event that the class teacher/tutor or senior leader and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised by the person dealing with the complaint to proceed in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Any complaint received during the holidays is likely to take longer to resolve.

A complaint about the Head or a member of the Governing Body should be made directly to the Chair of Governors. A complaint about the Chair of Governors should be made to the Vice Chair of Governors.

### **STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, stating clearly the grounds of their complaint and the

outcome they desire. The Head will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days, or as soon as practicable during the holidays. He will investigate, in the most appropriate way, the issues that have been raised.

In most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within fifteen working days of receiving the written complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head or another senior member of staff 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, normally within twenty working days of receipt of the original written complaint by the Headmaster. The Head will give reasons for his decision.

Any complaint received during the holidays is likely to take longer to resolve.

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, the Head will advise that their next course of action should be to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING**

If, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution under Stage 2, parents wish to request a panel hearing, the request must be made within five working days of receipt of the Head's decision, stating the outcome they desire and all the grounds of the complaint. The request will usually only be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2 have been completed and the panel will not consider any new areas of complaint that have not previously been raised as part of the complaints procedure. The parents will be referred to The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. If the Clerk of the Governors is the subject of the complaint, the parents will be referred to the Vice Chair of Governors. The parents should send to the Clerk a list of the documents they believe to be in the school's possession and wish the panel to see. Each case will be considered individually and independently.

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 Chair of the Governors, who will acknowledge the request for a panel hearing in writing within two working days of its receipt. He will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fifteen working days of receiving the written request from the parents.

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 three working days prior to the hearing.

The parents will be invited to the panel hearing by letter. Should the parents choose not to attend, the panel hearing will proceed in any case.

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 the parents do wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, they should notify the school at least seven working days before the hearing.

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 to the full Board of Governors as appropriate.

If possible, the panel will reach its findings immediately without the need for further investigation and will write to the parents within five working days of the hearing.

Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out and the hearing will be adjourned. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The panel will write to the parents within ten working days of the hearing, informing them of its findings and setting out any recommendations. The decision of the panel will be final.

The panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent within five working days in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, to staff involved and shall be made available for inspection at the school by the Board of Governors and by the Head. If the parents do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to them.

A written record of all formal complaints will be retained. Information recorded will be: the nature of the complaint, who was informed, what action was taken, and whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3. The number of formal complaints registered under the school's complaints procedure at Stage 2 or Stage 3 in the preceding school year is published at the end of this document, in Appendix 1.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of a safeguarding matter, or for an official inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Where a complaint has been handled by the Head or another member of the senior leadership team, a copy of all the notes and correspondence associated with that complaint are kept in a confidential file, kept by the Head's PA. These complaints are considered and analysed every year, and the Headmaster makes a report to the Board of Governors to enable patterns of concern and any action taken to be monitored.

The School's Complaints Procedure for Parents is included in information given to new parents and is publicised on the School's website. The School will always provide a copy of this procedure to parents or prospective parents on request. Any request should be made to the Head or to his PA.

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Approved by the Board of Governors: March 2017

Updated: August 2018

Review date: July 2019

## Appendix

### **Record of complaints registered under the formal procedure (Stage 2 or Stage 3) during the preceding school year**

In the academic year 2017/18 there were no complaints registered under the formal procedure (Stage 2 or Stage 3).