

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

(Senior and Junior Schools)

(This document is available on the school website or on request)

Reviewed December 2016

QEH recognises that a good partnership with parents is crucial in the successful education of their child. It welcomes feedback from parents, and seeks to establish good relations between home and school to enable pupils to feel supported and to be successful. It is therefore natural that parents will want to share concerns about their child's education, and occasionally might feel the need to go further and complain formally.

This policy is available to parents of current and prospective pupils. A current pupil is defined as a pupil on the school roll, but not one who has left the school. It is however available following expulsion or the required removal of a pupil, but not in respect of admissions to either QEH Senior or Junior School.

This policy allows a 3-stage process for resolving complaints: informal, formal and a review by a panel of Governors.

THE PROCESS

The Informal Stage (Stage 1)

Most concerns revolve around specific issues and these are best dealt with by the teacher most closely associated with your child or the specific subject or activity. So, for example, pastoral issues should be referred to the form tutor or Head of Year, academic concerns to the subject teacher or Head of Department, and sporting matters to the Director of Physical Education. In the Junior School the class teacher would usually be the first person to contact. Sometimes, if the matter is serious, you might feel you wish to speak to the Deputy Headmaster or Headmaster, who might then ask the appropriate member of staff to investigate.

In all cases you could telephone, e-mail or write or fix an appointment to come into school to see someone.

Our response

In some matters we will be able to give you an instant reply. In most cases we will need time to look into the matter. Our response should normally be made within a few school days and offer an assessment of the situation and a suggested way forward, which will often involve you in some way. If the school cannot respond within 5 working days you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and a response will be made within 10 working days or, in the school holidays, as soon as is practicable

The Formal Stage (Stage 2)

If you are not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved, you may wish to take the matter further by making a formal complaint to the Headmaster. The complaint should be written down and it should be made clear that this is a formal complaint. If the Headmaster is the subject of the complaint, you should write directly to the Chairman of Governors c/o the school. The Chairman will then ask a Governor to deal with the matter and, if the complaint proceeds to stage 3, that Governor will not be a member of the Hearing Panel. It should be possible to arrange a follow-up meeting (if required) within 10 working days to discuss an unresolved matter, and the school will respond to you in writing within (normally) no more than 10 working days after that meeting. If further investigation is required, the school will keep you informed but this may delay the response. During the school holidays, a response will be made as soon as is practicable and, if a complaint is received within 10 days of the end of term, a response may be delayed because personnel are unavailable.

The Review Stage (Stage 3)

At this stage, if the Headmaster has not resolved the complaint at the Formal Stage, you have the right to request a formal review of your complaint by a panel of Governors, whose decision will be final. Full details will be supplied of the review procedure and the ways in which you will be involved.

For Junior School complaints the same three-stage process applies with formal complaints being addressed to the Headmaster of the Junior School.

THE REVIEW PROCEDURE

Aims:

To review a formal parental complaint, which has not been resolved at stage 2.
To ensure the review is conducted fairly.

Important Note: These procedures are non-contractual in nature. They have been prepared for the information and guidance of all who may become concerned in reviewing a formal complaint or a formal review hearing.

Applying for a Review

1. Parents/guardians must apply for the review of a formal complaint using the Request for a Review Form (Appendix A). This form is available from the School Office and must be returned to the Bursar within 10 working days of receipt of the written notification of the decision in question.
2. Parents must state clearly in their letter the outcome desired and all the grounds for complaint. The Panel will not consider any new area of complaint which has not previously been raised under the Complaints Procedure

3. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the review hearing will take place as soon as convenient and, in any event, within 28 days of receipt by Governors of the request for a review. The Panel will not normally sit during the school holidays.
4. Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of any relevant documents, including copies of all correspondence relating to the case. The parents shall be entitled to copies of all those documents save any which, in the opinion of the Headmaster, should not be disclosed for the protection of the student or other students or members of staff and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The Review Panel

This will consist of a three member sub-committee of the Board of Governors. The panel members will have no previous detailed knowledge of the case or of the student, parents or guardian, and will not normally include the Chairman of Governors. Selection of the Review Panel will be made by the Chairman of the Board of Governors. The Review Panel will be joined by a member who is independent of the management and running of the school.

The Review Hearing

1. This will take place at the school premises.
2. Those present at the review hearing will normally be:-
 - Members of the Review Panel
 - The Headmaster
 - The person making the complaint
 - Clerk to the Governors or his deputy

The person making the complaint may be accompanied. That person will attend to provide support, and not to represent the complainant(s).

3. The proceedings will be chaired by one member of the Review Panel. They will be conducted in an informal manner and all statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. The Clerk will be asked to keep a minute of the main points that arise. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes. The hearing shall be directed at all times by the Chairman of the panel who will conduct the hearing in such a manner as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments. The requirements of natural justice will apply.
4. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chairman may in his/her discretion adjourn or terminate the hearing. If the hearing is terminated the original decision will stand. All parties should treat the matters discussed in confidence.

5. In relation to each of the points raised by the complaint, the Panel will consider whether correct procedures were followed in handling the formal complaint and whether the Headmaster's decision was appropriate.
6. If the Headmaster considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or of the school that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chairman of the Panel may require that the name of that person and the reasons for withholding it be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chairman in his/her discretion may direct that the person be identified.
7. When the Chairman of the Panel decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed, he/she will close the hearing and the four members of the Review Panel will meet in private to consider the case and to reach a decision.
8. The decision of the Review Panel will be final and a copy of any findings and recommendations will be notified to the parents and Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about, by the Chairman of the Review Panel by letter, e-mail or telephone within 7 days of the hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable.
9. A copy of any findings and/or recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about, and will be available for inspection at the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and Headmaster.

The school undertakes to keep all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual formal complaints confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002.

The School will keep a written record of all serious concerns and formal complaints and their resolution, including a written note of whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a hearing. That record of formal complaints will be reviewed annually by Governors. The School will keep a written record of any action taken as a result of any complaint (whether upheld or not).

Parents are also entitled to be informed of the number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year: there were no formal complaints in the Junior or Senior School during the academic year 2015-16.



REQUEST FOR A REVIEW

To: Clerk to the Governors

Name of Pupil:

Names of those with Parental responsibility

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Address of Parents/Guardian:

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Telephone numbers :.....(daytime).....(evening)

I/We, having parental responsibility for the above named pupil request that a sub-committee of the Board of Governors carries out a review of a formal complaint.

I/We have received with this form a copy of the Policy Statement on Review Procedures and we agree to abide by its terms.

I/We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final subject to any legal rights that may exist.

The grounds upon which we ask for a review and the matters which we wish to discuss and to ask the sub-committee to take into account are set out in the attached letter.

I/We understand that we may be accompanied at the Review Hearing. We also understand that that person attends only to provide support and not to act as a representative.

(Two signatures are required where practicable)

First signature..... Second signature.....

Full Name..... Full Name.....

Relationship to Pupil..... Relationship to Pupil.....

Date..... Date.....