

# **Talbot House Preparatory School**

## **Complaints Policy**

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### **Introduction**

- We believe that our school provides a good education for all our pupils (including Early Years Foundation Stage pupils) and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with pupils and their families. However, the school has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians, pupils, or by members of the public. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases. This is in line with Every Child Matters agenda, stay safe and enjoy and achieve.
- If any parent (including parents of EYFS children) is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk immediately to the child's form teacher, or another member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, or the Headteacher.
- If a pupil has any concerns or complaints, we encourage them to talk to a member of staff directly, or through their parents, to either the member of staff or the Headteacher.
- If the school and the Headteacher cannot resolve any complaint, those concerned may ask for Mark Broadway (the Director of Broadway Education) to become involved and a meeting will be convened.
- If all avenues have been explored and the problem is still unresolved then the parents may ask their lawyer.
- All parents have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaints.
- We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible.
- We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and in all cases we put the interests of the pupil above all other issues.
- We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved.

### **Monitoring and review**

- This policy is made available to all parents so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

## **COMPLAINTS INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

Talbot House Preparatory School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. This leaflet will show you how to use our complaints system.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response. We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, either by dialogue or letter.
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously.
- We take action where appropriate.

### **“How should I complain?”**

You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

Any member of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter directly to the Headteacher.

### **“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.”**

The school is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas.

### **“I am not sure whether to complain or not.”**

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to voice them. If in doubt, you should contact the school, as we are here to help.

### **“What will happen next?”**

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within five working days, either personally or in writing, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.

### **“What about confidentiality?”**

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headteacher and those directly involved.

**IT IS SCHOOL’S POLICY THAT COMPLAINTS MADE BY PARENTS  
SHOULD NOT REBOUND ADVERSELY ON THEIR CHILDREN. PUPILS ARE  
NOT PENALISED FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT IN GOOD FAITH.**

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police or the Area Child Protection Unit if the issue raised fell within the school's Child Protection Policy or if The Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them. Complainants would be fully informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

**“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”**

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the Headteacher will offer to refer the matter to the Director. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Director who will call for a full report from the Headteacher, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a positive solution, but if it does not, the Director will invite you to a meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

The Director, Mark Broadway, may be contacted on 07817 103889.

We hope that we will be able to satisfy your concerns. If we do not, you may wish to seek independent legal advice and your advisor should contact the school's solicitor. There are certain circumstances in which the Secretary of State has an interest and you could contact him directly or through your lawyer or MP; he would then ask the Registrar of Independent Schools to investigate, usually through HM Inspectors of Schools. Complaints regarding the registered provision of the EYFS may also be made to OFSTED at; **NBU, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.**

**WE HOPE THIS RECOGNISES AND ACKNOWLEDGES YOUR  
ENTITLEMENT TO COMPLAIN AND WE HOPE TO WORK WITH YOU IN  
THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
OUR CARE.**

**COMPLAINT REPORT FORM**

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE MEMBER OF STAFF FIRST APPROACHED  
AND GIVEN TO THE HEADTEACHER WITHOUT DELAY

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint brought by: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint brought to: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of details: (ATTACH LETTER/EMAIL IF COMPLAINT WAS WRITTEN)

Action taken:

Has the problem been resolved to the satisfaction of all involved: YES / NO

If not, what arrangements have been made to work towards a speedy solution?

DATE OF RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM: \_\_\_\_\_

STAFF MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_

HEADTEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

## **Complaints procedure**

### **The first stage – Informal resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and easily
- If parents have a complaint they should normally speak in the first instance to the member of staff concerned, or if this is not appropriate, to their child's teacher.
- If the member of staff who is first consulted cannot resolve the matter alone, it will usually be referred to the Headteacher.
- The member of staff who deals with the complaint will make a written record of all that is placed before him or her.
- Should the matter not be resolved within two weeks, parents will be advised to proceed with the second stage of this procedure.
- If parents wish to make a complaint directly against the Headteacher and if the Headteacher is unable to satisfy them in discussion, they must proceed to the third stage of the procedure.
- For written complaints relating to the fulfilment of EYFS requirements, complaints will be investigated and an outcome communicated to the complainant within 28 days. A record of these complaints will be made available on request. (Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666, ISI can be contacted on 0370 000 2288 / concerns@isi.net)

### **The second stage – Formal resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put the matter in writing to the Headteacher who will then decide what action to take.
- In most cases the Headteacher will meet the parents concerned within seven days of receiving their complaint in order to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached on this occasion.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations, either before or after the meeting, in order to settle the matter correctly.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and those concerned will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will give reasons for this decision.
- The Headteacher will make every endeavour to bring this stage of the proceedings to a close within two weeks of the matter being referred.
- If the complainants are still not satisfied with the result, they will be advised to proceed to the third stage of this procedure.

### **The third stage – Panel Hearing**

- If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they make request that the matter be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration.
- The Director will appoint the Chairman of the Panel. 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. The Panel members other than the Chairman shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Panel in consultation with the Director. The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within one week.

- 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 two 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 one week of the Hearing.
- The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing (or electronically) to the parents, the Director, the Headteacher and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made.
- A written record of all complaints will be kept regardless of the stage at which they were resolved.
- Parents 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 2002 Act requests access to them.

#### Confidentiality

All concerns and complaints relating to the conduct of Talbot House Preparatory School will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as may be required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection, as under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 or where any other legal obligation prevails.

#### Limitations to time

- No complaint under the second stage of the procedure outlined above can be accepted by the Headteacher if it is brought to him more than four weeks after the first stage has been concluded.
- No complaint under the third stage of the procedure can be accepted by the chair of the Appeals Committee if it is brought to him/her more than four weeks after the second stage has been concluded.