

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Eltham College has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. We welcome suggestions and comments from parents, and take seriously complaints and concerns that may arise. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. Complaints that relate specifically to academic matters and which are determined by the professional judgement of the teaching staff will ultimately be dealt with by the Headmaster, and should not pass Stage 2 of the procedure below.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's form teacher. They should talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, or telephone. They should be as clear as possible about what is troubling them. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, or the Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or the Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher unless the Head of Department or Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- If parents have made a complaint or suggestion in writing we will contact them within five working days to respond to their concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.
- The form teacher 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 ten days, or in the event that the form teacher 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.

### **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 Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within three 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.
- The complaint will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.
- 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. Parents would be fully informed.
- 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. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### 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 Deputy Chairman of Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- 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 Board of Governors on behalf of the Panel and will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.
- 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 five 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 ten days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors, and where relevant the person complained of.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 7.(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

### **General**

- A written record of all complaints is kept with the Headmaster, and this will indicate whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.
- In the Academic Year 2009-10 there were three complaints at stage 2 and none at stage 3.