

# THE GLEDDINGS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

## Complaints Procedure

This policy applies to all pupils in school, including Early Years Foundation Stage and out of school care and clubs.

**This policy takes account of the following documents and guidance:**

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- The Independent School Standards Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements September 2016
- DfE Guidance
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families Guidance
- OFSTED Guidance on Complaints
- Education and Skills Act 2008

**This policy is to be read in conjunction with all other school policies. Please particularly cross refer to the following policies:**

- Admissions
- Anti-Bullying (including Cyber and Homophobic Bullying)
- Asthma
- Behaviour and Discipline
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Children
- Children Learning English as an Additional Language
- Children with Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties or Disabilities and Inclusion
- Code of Conduct
- Collecting Children from School
- Curriculum
- Drug Education and Alcohol
- Equal Opportunities
- First Aid & Administering Medicines
- Health & Safety including Out of School Activities and Visits
- Missing Child
- PSHEE
- Sex and Relationship Education
- Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural (SMSC)

## INTRODUCTION

At The Gleddings we aim to provide a secure yet welcoming environment in which parents and staff can work in partnership in educating the children. For the purpose of this document a 'complaint' is to be interpreted as **'the expression of concern over any subject connected with the education and /or welfare of any pupil at the school'**. Complaints of any nature must be made to the Headteacher or in her absence any member of the Senior Leadership Team. Any problems relating to the welfare and wellbeing of any child at The Gleddings will be addressed immediately and absolute priority will be given to any matters causing concern to any parent.

### **This policy document assumes the following principles:**

- That a person making a complaint has a right to state his/her point of view.
- That the person against whom a complaint is made has a right to know immediately or as soon as possible thereafter, that a complaint has been made or that a concern has been expressed.

### **AIMS**

1. To ensure openness in regard to the procedures for dealing with any complaint.
2. To inspire the trust and confidence of parents and carers in the procedures adopted by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team.
3. To protect the rights and professional integrity of staff members and other employees of the school.

Any complaints received will be investigated according to the Independent School Standards Regulations by the Headteacher or a delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team appropriate to the nature of the complaint.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, including details of at which stage the complaint is resolved and action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

### **The Complaints Procedure**

The Gladdings School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedure. (Summary of time scale see Annex A).

#### **Stage 1 - Initial Approach (Informal)**

##### **Procedure**

1. Parents should have an opportunity for informal discussion of their concerns with an appropriate member of staff. This discussion should aim to clarify the nature of the parent's/carer's concern and assure them that the school wishes to hear about it. The discussion should also aim to clarify what kind of outcome the parent/carer is seeking.
2. If the member of staff contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, he/she should make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to the Headteacher or another appropriate member of staff. In either case a note of the name, date and contact details of the complainant should be taken. The first person contacted should check to make sure the referral has been successful. Parents will receive a response within 48 hours.
3. The Headteacher will ensure that staff are provided with guidelines about when to refer a matter and who to.
4. If the concern relates to the Headteacher and the parent feels unable to raise it with her they should be advised to contact any member of the Senior Leadership Team.
5. The staff member/Headteacher dealing with the complaint should make sure that the complainant is clear about what will happen next (if anything). This should be put in writing if it seems the best way of making the next steps or outcome clear.
6. If no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant should be informed about how they should proceed if they wish to take the complaint further. They should be informed of any advice and support that may be available to them.

N.B. it is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and INFORMALLY.

**Stage 2 – Initial approach to the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (Formal) (If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the following procedure should be used)**

**Procedure**

1. Parents who wish to pursue a complaint at Stage 2 should be asked to put the complaint and their desired outcome in writing to the Headteacher/SLT member. The Headteacher or SLT member should acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 school days of receipt giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedures and a target date for providing a response. Ideally this should be within 10 school days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
2. The Headteacher/SLT member may offer an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her. The complainant should, if he/she wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities will be made available if required.
3. If necessary the Headteacher/SLT member should interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed, normally with the parent/carer present. In some circumstances this may not be possible or appropriate and a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should attend with him/her. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind. Advice may need to be sought from an outside school source.
4. The Headteacher/SLT member should keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
5. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher or SLT member should either write to the complainant or arrange a meeting to discuss the matter. This meeting should be followed up with a letter summarizing the outcome of the meeting.
6. EYFS - Additional requirements apply for EYFS settings and written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

**Stage 3 – Formal Complaint to the Complaints Panel (if parents are still not satisfied with the decision they should be in stage 3 of the Procedure)**

**Procedure**

Upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 3 the following procedure will be followed. A suitable clerk to the panel should be appointed and a complaints panel formed, comprising of at least 3 members and one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

1. The clerk should write acknowledging receipt of the written request, informing the complainant that it will be heard by the panel as soon as possible but at least within 14 school days of receipt.
2. The clerk should convene a meeting of the complaints panel at a time which is convenient for the complainant of the school.
3. The clerk should ensure that the complainant, Headteacher and any other witnesses are given at least 5 school days notice in writing, of the date, time, place of the hearing. A shorter timescale may be arranged if all parties are in full agreement. The letter of notification to the complainant should inform him/her of their right to be accompanied by another adult if they so wish. The Headteacher should ensure that interpretation facilities for the hearing are offered and made

- available if required. The letter should set out the procedure for the conduct of the hearing (see Annex B) and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.
4. The clerk should invite the Headteacher to attend the hearing and then submit a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. The Headteacher may also invite any other members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing and/or in person to the complaint. Any involvement of other staff should be at the discretion of the Headteacher.
  5. All relevant documents should be received by all parties (including the complainant) at least 5 days before the meeting of the panel. This provides adequate opportunity to read them prior to the start of the meeting.
  6. Personnel from an outside source may be invited to attend the meeting to advise the panel.
  7. One member of the panel should be elected to ensure that proper minutes of the meeting are taken.
  8. The Headteacher should try to ensure that the proceedings are sufficiently informal to allow the complainant and other participants to feel at ease.
  9. At the conclusion of the representations and questions the HEADTEACHER should explain that the panel will consider the issues and write to both parties with their decision or judgement. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of a full investigation within 28 days.
  10. All except for the Headteacher, the panel and any advisers in attendance should then withdraw to enable them to consider the evidence. This should include: a judgement about the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and/or parent; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
  11. The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept confidentially on file in the school and kept for three years. The recorded complaint should be kept separate from the pupil's personal records.
  12. The broad outcomes recommended by the panel will be reported to the next full staff meeting by the Headteacher. The identity of all those taking part must be kept confidential.
  13. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and where relevant the person complained about and will be available for inspection on the school premises.
  14. If parents believe that we are not meeting the EYFS requirements they are invited to contact the school in the first instance. Details of how to contact Ofsted and/or ISI are:

OFSTED North Regional Centre  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

OFSTED general helpline telephone number  
0300 123 1231  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
Ground Floor  
CAP House  
9-12 Long Lane  
London EC1A 9HA  
Tel: 020 7600 0100  
Fax: 020 7776 8849

N.B the complaint will be handled in line with the school's Confidentiality Policy.

This policy was reviewed in November 2016.

Signed:

Headteacher

Next review date: November 2018

## **ANNEX A**

### **Summary of Time Scale for the Management of a Complaint**

#### **Stage 1**

Same day or as soon as practically possible.

#### **Stage 2**

Acknowledgment of complaint in writing within 5 school days. Response to complaint within 10 school days.

#### **Stage 3**

The complaint will be heard by the panel within at least 14 school days after receiving written request. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of a full investigation within 28 days.

#### **EYFS**

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

## **ANNEX B**

### **Model Procedure for the Conduct of a Stage 3 Headteacher/SLT Panel Hearing**

1. The Headteacher should invite all parties (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce them and explain the role of each person.
2. The Headteacher should explain to all present that the purpose of the hearing is to review a complaint and try to resolve it and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action.
3. The Headteacher should then ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines:
  - i) The complainant describes his/her complaint and may call witnesses.
  - ii) The Headteacher may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
  - iii) The SLT panel or its advisers may seek clarification from the complainant or any witnesses.
  - iv) The Headteacher will respond to the complainant and may call witnesses.
  - v) The complainant may seek clarification from the Headteacher and any witnesses.
  - vi) The SLT panel (including any advisers) may seek clarification from the Headteacher and any witnesses.
  - vii) The Headteacher will be given the opportunity to sum up.
  - viii) The complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up.
  - ix) Both parties will leave the room to allow the panel to deliberate but any advisers may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.
4. The panel should make a decision or judgement on the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and or parent; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
5. The decision or judgement will be confirmed in writing within 5 school days.

N.B If there is more than one complainant this procedure should be followed for each one in turn, unless the complainants agree to the complaints being heard at one sitting.