



## Ashford School and Ashford Friars Preparatory School

### Complaints

#### Policy Statement

The Local Governing Body and staff of Ashford School and Ashford Friars are committed to providing the best experience for pupils and parents. We understand that when there is dissatisfaction and a pupil or parent wishes to express their concern or make a formal complaint we have a duty to listen, investigate and communicate.

We pride ourselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our pupils. If a parent or a pupil has a concern we hope that it can be dealt with satisfactorily together to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. Pupils are not penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Should it be needed, we will treat complaints in the following way. This procedure is used in all sections of the School, including Bridge House (EYFS) and Boarding. This policy is available on the school website for current and prospective parents ([www.ashfordschool.co.uk](http://www.ashfordschool.co.uk)) and from the School Office on request.

#### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution of a Concern

- Most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a parent has a concern they should normally contact their son/daughter's tutor (or form/class teacher or group leader). In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the teacher or group leader cannot resolve the matter alone he/she may need to consult with other staff.
- Concerns made directly to a senior member of staff (e.g. Head/Deputy Head/Head of the Prep School) will usually be referred to the relevant person responsible unless the senior member of staff deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The person dealing with the concern will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 and to raise a formal complaint.

#### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution of a Complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their concern in writing to the Head (or the Chair of the Council if the complaint is about the Head) at which point it becomes a formal complaint. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, a senior member of staff not so far involved in the complaint will speak with the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the senior member of staff to carry out further investigations: written records of meetings held in relation to the complaint will be kept.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed in writing within 28 days of the school having received the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If a parent seeks to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the School Council, who calls hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be dealt with by the Complaints 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the United Church Schools Trust or its representatives. The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working 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 three working days prior to the hearing.
- The parent may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Similarly, the Head may be accompanied. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, and the proceedings will not be tape-recorded without the consent of both the Chairman of the Complaints Panel and the parent; any tape-recording will be used only to assist the Panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons, and will belong to the School.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parent, the Head, UCST Board, the School Council 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them. Specifically, Ofsted will be provided, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the

action which was taken as a result of each complaint. These records are reviewed regularly by the Head.

A formal written record will be kept of complaints for a period of three years, indicating whether they have been resolved and at what stage.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2009/10) was 2.

Should parents, parents of boarders or boarders wish to they may raise concerns directly with Ofsted and/or ISI.

<p><b>Independent Schools Inspectorate</b></p> <p>CAP House 9-12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA</p> <p>Telephone 0207 600 0100 <a href="http://www.isi.net/">http://www.isi.net/</a></p>	<p><b>Ofsted</b></p> <p>Royal Exchange Buildings St Anne's Square Manchester M27LA</p> <p>Telephone 0845 640 4045 <a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a></p>
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