



FOREST SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

v2.2

Approved (Date):	1 October 2021
Next review (Date):	October 2022
Owner (Name, Title):	Warden and The Bursar
Classification:	Statutory
Comment:	Formal complaints separated by School

Complaints Procedure

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Stage 1 – Informal Resolution	3
3.	Stage 2 – Formal Resolution	4
4.	Stage 3 – Panel Hearing	5
5.	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)	6
6.	Retention:	7

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Forest School (hereafter referred to as ‘the School’) takes great care with the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils at the School do wish to make a complaint it is our intention that the complaint will be treated seriously and dealt with promptly, impartially and sensitively.

Parents can be assured that any concerns and complaints raised will not adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at Forest School.

- 1.2 A ‘concern’ may be defined as ‘an expression of wrong or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which re-assurance is sought’. A ‘complaint’ may be generally defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’. (DfE 2016 updated 2019)

- 1.3 **The School's complaints procedure has three stages:**

Stage 1: informal raising of a concern or difficulty with a member of staff orally or in writing as set out in 2.1 - 2.10

Stage 2: a formal complaint in writing to the Warden

Stage 3: a reference to the Complaints Panel

A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made and whether they are resolved following an informal procedure, or proceed to a formal process.

A record will also be kept of the action taken by the School as a result of a complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

- 1.4 Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
- 1.5 Parents making a complaint can expect the following procedure to apply. Working days for the purposes of this procedure shall mean working days during a school term.
- 1.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with;

Appeals from exclusions
Behaviour Policy
School Rules
Admissions Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Keeping Children Safe in Education, Statutory Guidance

2. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

2.1 It is hoped that most minor complaints or concerns will be resolved quickly and informally as part of the regular dialogue between home and school. The School will wish to take whatever measures are necessary to sort out any problems effectively before they turn into a formal matter. Such measures will include some or all of the following: giving advice or reassurance; explaining the context to an incident or a decision; gathering information from other staff or from pupils; finding information from other sources; referring the potential complaint to a senior colleague; reviewing or amending the School's practice; giving feedback to parents; acknowledging and apologising for mistakes or oversights.

The following process outlined in 2.2-2.9 uses Senior School nomenclature. In the Prep School parents should contact their child's Form Teacher in the first instance who will liaise with the relevant Prep School Deputy Heads, Senior Deputy Head of the Prep School and the Head of Prep School according to the severity of the matter. Prep School parents may choose to make a complaint to other members of staff who will follow the appropriate pathways of consultation. Should the matter not be resolved with the complaint having been escalated appropriately to the Head of Prep School, parents are advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 which would include the Warden.

- 2.2 If a tutor is unable to resolve the parents concern or if the concern is in relation to a member of staff, they will refer the matter to the appropriate Head of Section. The Head of Section will include the relevant Deputy Head or the Bursar in the process, as appropriate, depending on whether the nature of the complaint is academic, pastoral, disciplinary, financial, co-curricular or other.
- 2.3 If the complaint is about the Tutor, then the parent should contact the relevant Head of House who will refer the complaint to the relevant Head of Section.
- 2.4 In all cases of complaints against a member of staff, the Head of Section will act as the Complaint Manager, gathering information from tutors, teachers, Heads of Departments and Heads of House as appropriate. The Head of Section will respond to the parent once they have the information or resolution.
- 2.5 When a parent raises a concern about a member of staff the original email should be sent directly to the relevant Head of Section and not be put on a pupil file or sent to a school office email distribution list. The Head of Section will retain a working file while they investigate the issue which they will share with the relevant Deputy Head. Once the issue has been resolved the working file containing the original complaint and the resolution will be added to the pupil file. A separate report will be added to the staff file to record specific staff concerns.

- 2.6 It is hoped that working closely with Heads of Departments, subject teachers, Heads of House and Tutors, the Heads of Section will be able to address most concerns. However, when this is not the case, the relevant Deputy Head will be at the end point of the informal stage of the complaints procedure and will hold any necessary meetings with staff or pupils in the attempt to reach an informal resolution.
1. Parents may also make complaints directly to other members of staff, for example to Heads of Department, Heads of Section or the Deputy Heads, who will pass the complaint to the appropriate member of staff in order for them to resolve the complaint quickly and to the parents' satisfaction.
- 2.7 A written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received will be kept.
- 2.8 All complaints will be treated in a timely and confidential manner. Knowledge of the complaint will be limited to those directly involved.
- 2.9 Should the matter not be resolved in this informal way within 10 working days of the complaint being made, and with the complaint having clearly been escalated appropriately to at least Deputy Head level, parents are advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 which would include the Deputy Warden and the Warden.

3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 3.1 If the complaint cannot be, or is not being resolved on an informal basis, then the parents may at any time put their complaint in writing to the Warden. Parents should outline the issues and include all relevant information, stating that they wish to make a formal complaint, which members of staff have spoken to already, the nature of the complaint and the specific remedy they are seeking. Parents should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at Stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, parents will be advised that they will be dealt with under Stage 1.
- 3.2 The Warden will respond to the parent concerned within 5 working days, indicating how the School proposes to proceed. In most cases the Warden will invite the parents concerned to an initial informal meeting to discuss the nature of the complaint and the remedy they are seeking and to explore resolutions. At the end of this meeting the parents will be asked to confirm that they wish to proceed with Stage 2.
- 3.3 If Stage 2 proceeds, it may be necessary for the Warden or, acting on his behalf, the Deputy Warden or another member of the Leadership Team to carry out further investigations and these will begin as soon as possible. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 3.4 Once the Warden is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made within 5 working days and the parents will be informed of this decision, and the reasoning behind it, in writing.
- 3.5 The period of time between the Warden receiving the complaint and informing parents of the final decision will be no longer than 20 working days. Please note that any complaint received within 20 working days of the end of term or half term is likely to

take longer to resolve owing to school holidays and the unavailability of staff.

- 3.6 The Warden will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 3.7 It is hoped that parents will feel satisfied with the outcome, or that, at least, all concerns they have raised have been fully and fairly considered. If parents are not satisfied they may if they wish proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure

4. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 4.1 Where parents are not satisfied with the response to their complaint under Stage 2, or where the parent's complaint relates to the Warden's own actions, they should contact the Clerk to the Governors to request a panel hearing. The Clerk to the Governors has been appointed by Governors of Forest School to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

Name of the Clerk to the Governors: Mrs Ann Crawley

Telephone number: 020 8509 6504

Email: clerktothegovernors@forest.org.uk

- 4.2 The letter to the Clerk to the Governors should set out the parents' specific grounds of appeal/ complaint and include a list of supporting documents they wish to go before the Complaints Panel. The letter should be delivered to the Clerk to the Governors within 5 working days of the receipt of the Warden's decision at Stage 2.
- 4.3 The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Complaints Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and certainly within 20 working days.
- 4.4 The request will usually only be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2 have been completed and the Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The Warden may supply to the Clerk to the Governors a statement in response to the Stage 3 complaint and any documentation which the Warden wishes to go before the Complaints Panel. The Warden should do so within 7 working days from the date the Warden receives a copy of the information provided by the parents at clause 4.5 (above). This will be passed to the Panel.

- 4.5 The complaints panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors of Forest School who will appoint a Chair of the Panel from the three members of the Panel.
- 4.6 The Complaints Panel will consider the documentation from all parties well in advance of the day set for the hearing to allow proper time for the Complaints Panel to request further details of the complaint, or any matter related to it, and for such information to be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be provided by the Clerk to the Governors to all concerned parties not later than seven working days prior to the hearing.

- 4.7 Parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. The name and profession of the person they wish to be accompanied by should be confirmed no later than 5 working days after the Panel hearing date is confirmed. Legal representation will not be appropriate.
- 4.8 The Complaints Panel will request a meeting with the Warden before the hearing if they require clarification on any of the written information provided by the School. The Panel will also be able to ask the parents for any other relevant information or documentation.
- 4.9 If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will inform concerned parties how it should be carried out and the time within which it should be completed.
- 4.10 A minute of proceedings will be taken.
- 4.11 After consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will decide on its findings and recommendation within 10 days of the Hearing. The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents informing them of its findings and recommendations, and the reasons for them. The findings and recommendations of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Warden, the Chair of Governors of Forest School and, where appropriate, the person about whom the complaint was made.
- 4.12 A hearing under this procedure is not a legal hearing, but a private and confidential matter. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.
- 4.13 The hearing will be minuted but not tape, video or digital recording may be made by any party. The minute will not be a verbatim account but is intended to be an accurate reflection of what was discussed. The minutes will be shared with any member of staff cited in the complaint. No notes, other records or oral statements about any matter discussed or arising from the proceedings shall be made available directly or indirectly to third parties, including the press or other media.
- 4.14 Unless the parent indicates prior to the panel hearing that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further, the panel hearing should proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion and allowing the school to review processes or practice, as appropriate. This does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

5. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- 5.1 In the case of complaints received relating to pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a record of complaints is kept for three years. Parents of pupils in the EYFS may contact Ofsted 0300 123 1231 and ISI (020 7600 0100) and may make a complaint to Ofsted and ISI if they so wish. Complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation

within 28 days of the School having received the complaint. The School will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, with a written record of all the complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

6. Retention:

6.1 The period of retention for all complaints will be for a minimum of seven years and these will be held with the Wardens PA. In direct liaison with the LADO, KCISE and WT, any complaint that is associated to an allegation against a member of staff including supply staff or volunteer will be retained for the term of the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

During the 2020 – 21 academic year, the School received two formal complaints. One in the Senior School and one in the Preparatory School.

Appendix 1 Procedural flowchart

