

# SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Sevenoaks School is committed to providing the best teaching and pastoral care it can for its pupils. It is hoped that any worries or complaints can be dealt with informally through the Pastoral framework, but if not the school has a formal complaints procedure. Formal complaints are extremely rare, reflecting the good relationships between pupils, parents and the school which enables most matters to be resolved informally. The number of formal complaints considered in the last twelve months is available from the Pastoral Deputy Head.

### **Pastoral Framework**

If pupils have worries or complaints they should speak to the Boarding House Master/mistress or Tutor or any member of staff that they trust. Divisional Heads and Deputy Heads are always available.

Pupils can also turn to Prefects or Peer Counsellors, the School Counsellor, School Nurses, the School Doctor, Boarding House Matrons, the Chaplain or outside the school Social Services (01732 456223), Childline (0800 1111) or the Samaritans (08457 909090).

Boarders and their parents may also contact Ofsted (08456 404040) [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org) if they have any complaints regarding their welfare.

It is particularly important for pupils to realise that if they are in trouble over something they are entitled to have a friend, or Tutor, or Housemaster/ Housemistress with them when talking to their Housemaster, Divisional Head, Deputy Head or Head.

If a complaint is made against an individual, where practical it will initially be considered by a person filling an appropriate appointment at the level immediately above the level of the person about whom there has been a complaint. For example, a complaint about a teacher will be considered initially by the Head of Department.

### **The Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If pupils or parents have a complaint or concern, they should normally contact the Tutor or Boarding Housemaster/mistress. The Boarding Housemaster/mistress or Tutor will aim to resolve the issue with the pupils or parents and is likely to consult the Divisional Head and the Pastoral Deputy Head.

- The Tutor and, where appropriate, the Divisional Head, will speak with or meet the pupils or parents as soon as possible and within seven working days of the complaint to attempt to provide a resolution.
- If the complaint is against a specific member of staff, the Head will have the right to decide whether the member of staff's presence is appropriate at this stage.
- If pupils or parents believe that the complaint is of a more serious nature, they may make their complaint directly to the Pastoral Deputy Head or the Head. The Pastoral Deputy Head or Head will aim to resolve the issue and will meet or contact the pupils or parents within ten working days of the complaint.
- Complaints made directly to a member of staff other than the Tutor, or the Divisional Head, Pastoral Deputy Head or Head, will normally, in the first instance, be referred to the Tutor.
- A written record of all concerns and complaints will be kept and the school (the PA to the Head) will keep a copy of the written record.
- If, after the meeting, there is no satisfactory resolution, pupils and parents are advised to proceed to Stage 2 of the procedure.
- If a complaint is received about the Head it is hoped the matter can be resolved informally. If a complainant believes this would not be possible, the complaint should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors, who will liaise with the Chairman of Governors, the complainant and, as appropriate, the Head. If the matter cannot be resolved by these means, the complaint will be considered under Stage 3: Appeals Procedure.

### **Stage 2: Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, pupils or parents should put their complaint in writing to the Boarding Housemaster/mistress, Tutor, Divisional Head, Deputy Head or Head.
- The Head or Pastoral Deputy Head will meet the pupil or parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the complaint is made against a specific member of staff, that member of staff may be present at this meeting. The Head will have the right to decide whether the member of staff's presence is appropriate at this stage.
- The Deputy Head or Head will investigate the matter and will provide a response to that complaint within a further five working days. That response will explain the decision, the reasons for the decision and any action taken or proposed, and will go to all interested parties.
- The school will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- If pupils or parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure, which will be considered by the Governors.

### **Stage 3: Appeals Procedure**

- If pupils or parents wish to proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure, they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then normally be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two Governors and one panel member who will be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receipt and schedule a hearing to take place within a further ten working days.
- The Panel may require that all details of the complaint should be supplied in advance. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
- If the complaint is made against a member of staff, the particulars of the complaint will be made available to the member of staff, and that member of staff will have the right to speak with the Complaints Panel.
- The parents and, where applicable, the member of staff may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the pupils or parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- When 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 seven working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the pupils or 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 pupils or parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.
- A written record will be kept by the Clerk to the Governors.

### **Confidentiality**

Pupils and parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the school by any other legal obligation.