

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Legal Status:

This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be managed in accordance with Part 7, paragraph 33 (a) to (k) inclusive, along with the provision of information being made available in Part 6 Paragraph 32 (3) (f) of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 in force from 5th January 2015. The policy also has regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools/Residential Special Schools/ Children's homes regulations (DfE: 2015)

Complaints Procedure applies to:

- only parents of pupils registered and currently attending The Gower School
- the whole school including the Nursery (Early Years Foundation Stage), out of school care - Breakfast Club, After School Club, Holiday Fun Club and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching and support staff), students on placement, the proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

Timescale

- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days of having received the complaint, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.
- Written records of complaints and their outcome will be kept and stored for a minimum of three years (please see section on Record Keeping on page four).
- The school will investigate written complaints (including relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements), and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint
- The school will provide a written record of all complaints to Ofsted upon request.

Availability

- The Complaints Procedure is provided in the information for prospective pupils, parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.
- This procedure is also made available to parents, staff and pupils in the Parent Handbook, in the School Prospectus, and on the School website: www.thegowerschool.co.uk It is also made available to parents or guardians of pupils on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail: info@thegowerschool.co.uk

Other Relevant Document for Employees:

- Staff Grievance Procedure and Staff Whistle Blowing Procedure

Monitoring and Review:

- The Principal logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- The Proprietor monitors the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. She also retains details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year and carries out a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure for the purposes of monitoring.
- The Proprietor undertakes a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than March 2022, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Anna Gower'.

Date reviewed: March 2021

Date of next review: March 2022

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Miss Emma Gowers
Principal and Proprietor

Introduction

We take great care with the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to our students. However, if parents do wish to make a complaint they can expect the following procedure to apply.

This policy is application to all students, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The Gower School aims to be fair, open and honest by giving careful consideration to all complaints, dealing with them as swiftly as possible. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable time-frame. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation, but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. We aim to resolve any complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. Pupils will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We actively encourage strong home-school links and ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents. We also ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint.

Where the person being complained about is named as the person who would be handling the complaint in these procedures, their role will be passed upwards to their Line Manager. For example, teacher to Lower/Upper School Coordinator or Director of Studies, or Deputy Head of Nursery to Head of Nursery. The timescales indicated in the procedures below should allow for swift resolution of complaint. There will be some circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors. It is intended that all issues will be resolved within twenty-eight (28) working days of the first complaint being made.

Working Day

For the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' shall mean working days during school term time. In the event of a complaint arising during the school holidays, wherever possible, this will maintain the same time periods as during term time. However, the Principal will need to ascertain the exact time required to secure the necessary information and, if there is the need to go beyond this time scale, will inform the parents accordingly in writing.

The Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved at this level to the parents' satisfaction.

If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with a member of the school Senior Leadership Team.

Any complaints made directly to the Principal will usually be referred back to the relevant member of staff unless the Principal considers it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should this be the case, the aim will still be to resolve the matter informally. However, the involvement of the Principal at this stage will be in exceptional circumstances.

Stage 1 complaints should be addressed within 7 working days from the point at which they are received. Where there are reasons which prevent this from happening, the staff member dealing with the complaint will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.

- If parents have a complaint they should contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as the child's teacher. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone then it will be necessary for the member of staff to meet with the parents with their line manager. This meeting should be written up and the notes sent to the Principal on the same day.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. This should be emailed to the Principal same day. Should the matter not be resolved on an informal basis, in a face to face meeting, despite the teacher's best efforts, within five working days or in the event that the member of staff 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.
- Most complaints are resolved at this informal stage.
- A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

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Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: Contacting the Head of Nursery, Head of Operations, Senior Children’s Manager or the Principal

If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint informally, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take including the person to take the lead in any investigation.

The Principal will respond to parents within five working days indicating how the school proposes to proceed.

It may be necessary for the Principal, or the person taking the lead, to carry out further investigations. If this is the case then written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

In most cases, the person taking the lead will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made in relation to the complaint within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received. Parents will be informed of this decision, and the reasoning behind it, in writing.

Where it is not possible to give a full reply within 10 working days, the Principal will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.

It is expected that a resolution will be reached at this stage and that parents will feel assured that all of their concerns have been fully and fairly considered. If, in extreme circumstances, parents are not satisfied with the process they are able to bring into play Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

Where the parents are not satisfied with the response or process undertaken at Stage 2, the matter will be referred to a Complaints Panel.

Parents should request a referral to a Complaints Panel by completing the form at the back of this document.

A complaint form should be delivered by post or by email to the school office within 5 working days of receipt of the decision at Stage 2 above.

The school office will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 complaint and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint.

The Complaints Panel will be appointed by the Principal. The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel Chair, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 2 complaint.

If the Chair of the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint and any relevant documents or records be supplied in advance of the panel meeting. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all the parties wherever practicable and not later than 3 working days prior to this hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. Recordings of hearings are not permitted.

The Hearing will take place on School Premises wherever possible, and the Panel should invite the complainant to address them for a specified time period. Additionally, the Panel may wish to interview the senior member of staff who dealt with the matter at Stage 2, if relevant, as well as the Principal or Head of Nursery.

If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the parents’ complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how this should be carried out. This may involve interviewing members of the school staff team. After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of their decision and the reasons for it.

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The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Head/Principal and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be held confidentially and made available for inspection in the school by the proprietor and by inspectors on request.

This exhausts the complaints procedure after the decision has been communicated in writing. The decision of the Complaints Panel is Final.

The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents within the Complaints Procedure.

No Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints have been received.

Confidentiality

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints, are to be kept confidential except;

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting and inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails.

Record keeping for the Whole School, including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing is kept by the Principal, for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Principal/Proprietor will examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint, whether or not they were upheld. Parents may contact the Principal to ask for the number of formal complaints made during the previous academic year.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Principal (See our Safeguarding Policy for details of the procedure).

Early Years

This policy is compliant with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where parents believe that the school is not fulfilling the requirements of the EYFS they are entitled to raise concerns with either ISI or Ofsted (see below for contact details). All complaints relating to the EYFS are investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. Where parents do not believe that an early years complaint has been resolved they can raise this with Ofsted via email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 1231. All paperwork with regard to complaints to Ofsted will be kept by the school for 3 years. Additionally, you can raise concerns by writing to **ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA**, or to concerns@isi.net.

If concerns relate to bullying or possible child abuse then in the first instance you can contact ISI on concerns@isi.net or **0207 6000 100** and they will advise. In addition to ISI and/or the Department for Education, parents can contact the child protection unit of the local authority social services department.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be exceptional occasions when, despite the following of all stages of the procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, The Gower School reserves the right to inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Where a complainant seeks to raise a subsequent complaint matter which is otherwise different to the original complaint at Stage 3, this matter in itself would be treated as a new informal complaint.

Recording of Complaints

All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are duly recorded in the School Complaint Register, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result. The stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded.

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