

Trinity School

Complaints Policy



DOCUMENT REVIEW

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“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12: 14

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Purpose:

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents of pupils, at Trinity School. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents and students made against Trinity School except in respect of;

- a. **Child protection allegations** where a separate policy and procedure applies
- b. **Exclusions** where a separate policy and procedure applies
- c. **Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications** where a separate appeals procedure applies.

Trinity School expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use reasonable endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to exclude a student, must be given verbally or in writing to the Headmaster and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Aim(s):

- Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response.
- We will do all we can to resolve your concern and to ensure you are happy with the education that your child receives at Trinity School.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.
- Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except in so far as is required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of Trinity School’s inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.



Consultation:

Governors

All governors were provided with draft copies of the document for review and comment.

Sources and references:

Use the Key Guidance

New School's Network Guidance

Principles/values:

This policy is based on our commitment to our values particularly:

Procedures and practice

Our Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Be easily accessible and publicised
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provide information to Trinity School's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

Trinity School will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

Stage One - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or Headmaster.



3. Complaints made directly to a Deputy Head or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant line manager unless the Deputy Head or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Line Manager will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. These records will be kept for one (1) year after the student leaves Trinity School.
5. Trinity School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten (10) working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in school holidays where Trinity School will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible.
6. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the Line manager and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 of stage one above), then parents should put their complaint in writing to Trinity School's Headmaster using the Complaint Form at Appendix A. Parents should use the form to identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.

1. The Headmaster will delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to a Deputy Head unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
2. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
3. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
4. The Headmaster will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within ten (10) working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays where the Headmaster will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible.
5. The Headmaster may decide to appoint an independent member of staff to carry out further investigations.
6. The Headmaster will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.



7. Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten (10) working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 4 above). This is due to meeting having already taken place earlier – no second meeting necessary, rather written response.
8. Trinity School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and Trinity School's decision, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the student leaves Trinity School. This record will state whether complaints were resolved at the preliminary hearing or if they were taken to appeal.
9. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of Trinity School's response to their formal complaint, they have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by an independent Complaints Panel. (Stage 3)

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Headmaster's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the parents may, in writing addressed to Trinity School, request that their complaint is further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.

1. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.
2. Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten (10) working days of the date of Trinity School's decision being notified to them in accordance with the Stage Two Procedure. The parents should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against Trinity School, including those which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.
3. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
4. Where an appeal is received by Trinity School, it will, within five (5) working days, refer the matter to the Clerk to the Board of Governors who will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by Trinity School during school holidays, or within two (2) working days of their commencement, Trinity School has up to five (5) working days upon commencement of the next school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.
5. The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.



6. Once an appeal has been received by the Clerk, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five (5) working days, and inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.
7. The Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty (20) school days after receipt by Trinity School of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
8. The independent Complaints Panel will consist of two Governors on the Board who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of Trinity School. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education.
9. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - a. The parent/s (or, if aged over 18, the student) and/or one representative;
 - b. The Headmaster of Trinity School and/or one representative; and
 - c. Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.

Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

10. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
 - a. Documents in support of complaint(s),
 - b. Chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
 - c. Written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

11. Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than ten (10) working days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five (5) working days in advance of the Panel hearing.



12. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will make a decision about the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
13. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten (10) working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. Any recommendations that may have financial or resource implications for Trinity School will need the appropriate approval from the relevant authorities e.g. the Board of Governors.
14. The Panel's findings will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents, the Governors on the panel, and the Headmaster and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.
15. Trinity School will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves Trinity School.

Concluding Notes:

Monitoring and evaluation:

The Governing Body will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Other Documents and Appendices

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Appendix B: Flowchart

Appendix A: Complaint Form



<p>Your name:</p> <p>Student's name:</p> <p>Your relationship to the student:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Day time telephone number:</p> <p>Evening telephone number:</p> <p>Please give details of your complaint.</p> <p>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?</p>
<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</p> <p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Official use</p> <p>Date acknowledgement sent:</p> <p>By who:</p> <p>Complaint referred to:</p> <p>Date:</p>

Please complete and return to the Deputy Head who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.



Appendix B: Process Flowchart

