

GODOLPHIN SCHOOL

**COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS (including EYFS) POLICY
(Regulatory)**

Reviewed by: Head

Reviewed: September 2020

Next Review: September 2021

See also:
Living together at Godolphin – Complaints by Students



Complaints by Parents (including EYFS) Policy

Introduction

This policy explains how any complaint by parents of students at Godolphin is dealt with. In the Senior School, students themselves are referred to the document, *Living together at Godolphin – Complaints by Students*, which explains how they can seek help and, if necessary, make a complaint. In the Prep School girls are encouraged to talk to an adult member of staff, preferably their form teacher although this is not imperative as every staff member has a duty of care towards them.

This policy has been approved by the Head and the Governing Body. It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The policy applies to all sections of the School including our EYFS setting. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case.

It is the School's aim to address any complaints in a positive manner and as quickly as possible and all parents and students are encouraged to tell the School of any worries and concerns before they become major issues. This policy is available to all parents of students on the School's website.

The School will also make available to parents and will provide, upon request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of the complaints policy and of the number of complaints registered under the formal stage of the complaints procedure during the preceding school year. This information may be requested from the Clerk to the Governors by writing to:

Clerk of the Governors
Godolphin School
Milford Hill
Salisbury
SP1 2RA



What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School and may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff or pupil. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or has failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that a student will not be penalised for a complaint made in good faith.

Types of Complaints

The majority of complaints received will generally fall into one of the following categories:

- financial and administrative (including breach of contract)
- academic (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little prep, progress in a particular subject, etc.)
- pastoral care (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the student, unhappiness of the student, accommodation, etc.)
- safeguarding and child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues, etc.)

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The School will endeavour to resolve all complaints as quickly as possible in accordance with the three stages described below.

If parents raise an issue, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to their satisfaction. During term time it is the School's policy to acknowledge an informal complaint within 24 hours and to endeavour to resolve the matter normally within 5 working days. When we refer to "working days" we mean Monday to Friday, during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School website.

During holiday periods this process may take longer depending on the availability of relevant staff and the complexity of the complaint: The School will notify parents within 7 working days of the timeframe for dealing with the matter.

If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of any informal resolution, they may put their complaint formally in writing or by e-mail. During term time the School will acknowledge any formal complaint within 3 working days and will explain how it proposes to proceed: It will then aim to resolve the matter within 28 working days of the complaint. During holiday periods this process may again take longer depending on the availability of staff and the complexity of the complaint: The School will notify parents within 7 working days of a practical timescale for resolution of the matter.

If the complaint is still not resolved either informally or formally, it may be referred to a Complaints Panel which will invite parents to a hearing prior to making such findings and recommendations as it wishes to the Governing Body within 14 days of the date of the hearing.

Any complaints relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will be resolved within the timeframe above, except that in any event, parents will be notified of the outcome of an investigation into any complaint during term time within 28 days of the complaint, and during holiday periods as soon as possible after that time.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by speaking with the person best able to address the issue. If parents have a complaint they should, as a first step, contact the appropriate person as listed below:

Education Matters

If the complaint relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, it should be discussed with the student's Tutor in the first instance. The Tutor will help parents to put their concerns if necessary to the appropriate Head of Department or the Academic Deputy. If the concern relates to the Tutor, the Head of Year should be contacted.

Pastoral care

If the complaint relates to a matter outside the classroom, parents should contact the Housemistress (Boarders) / Head of Year (Sarums) in the first instance who will refer parents to the Pastoral Deputy, Head of Year or, if necessary to the Head. If the complaint relates to the Housemistress/Head of Year, parents should refer directly to the Pastoral Deputy.

Disciplinary Matters

A complaint about disciplinary matters should be first raised with the Housemistress/ Head of Year who may refer parents to the member of staff who imposed the sanction. If the matter is still unresolved, parents will be referred to the Senior Deputy Head.

Financial Matters

A complaint about matters relating to fees or extras should be addressed to the School Business Manager.

Godolphin Prep

In the Prep, academic, pastoral or disciplinary matters should be raised with the daughter's teacher or tutor who may be able to resolve the matter. Parents may prefer to raise their concern/complaint with the Prep Head.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by these means to the parents' satisfaction. If the relevant member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with a Head of Department/Head of Year, the Deputy Head and/or the Head of the Senior School or Prep School, as appropriate.

The member of staff dealing with the issue will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received, or referred to a more senior member of staff. Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily within 5 working days of the School receiving the complaint or, during holiday periods, within the timeframe notified to parents, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint as a formal complaint, in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

The School hopes that any complaints can be resolved informally under Stage 1 above. If, however, parents have sought to resolve the matter informally and are not satisfied with the outcome, they should write directly to, or email the Head, asking for the matter to be treated as a formal complaint.

An acknowledgement will be sent and the Head will then call for a full report and for all relevant documents in order to thoroughly investigate the matter. At the Head's discretion, she may also notify the Chair of Governors or, if he is unavailable or the complaint relates to him, the Vice Chair. The Head, together if appropriate with the Chair (or Vice Chair), will take such further

action as she, or they, consider appropriate: This may include inviting the parents to a meeting with either, or both, of them, to take place as soon as possible after receipt of the formal complaint. The Head will notify the parents of the final outcome of the involvement with her and/or the Chair (or Vice Chair) and of any meeting. If the matter relates to the Head, parents should make their formal complaint directly to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If Stage 2 does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, the matter will, at the parents' request, be referred by the Chair (or Vice Chair) to a Complaints Panel. That task of the panel will be to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. A panel hearing will take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed with the panel hearing. If the parent has not specified that they are satisfied, the panel hearing will proceed even if the parent does not attend, in order to bring the matter to its conclusion.

The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three persons appointed by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Governors and who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the School. The parents will be invited to attend a hearing and will be asked if there are any papers that they would like to have circulated beforehand. They will also be invited to be accompanied at the hearing by a friend, if they wish. The panel will be provided with terms of reference / guidance for any hearing. The panel will hear the appeal, consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome. The panel will make such findings and recommendations to the Governing Body as it wishes, and will pass its report to the Governing Body within 14 days of the date of conclusion of the hearing. These findings and recommendations will be sent to the parents who made the complaint and, where relevant, to the person complained about, and will be available for inspection at the School by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Governors and the Head.

Recording Complaints

The School will keep written records of all formal complaints, which will be recorded on a register held by the Head's PA, noting whether they were resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing. A written record will also be kept of action taken by the School as a result of a formal complaint regardless of whether it is upheld.

At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept of any complaints which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent

- Name of student
- Description of the issue
- Records of all investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Record of the final resolution

The records for EYFS complaints are kept for a minimum of three years. On request, the School will provide ISI and/or OFSTED with a written record of all complaints relating to EYFS made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of the complaint will be limited to the Head, relevant members of the Senior Management Team and other members of staff who may be directly involved. The Chair of Governors may also need to be informed together with the Governing Body. However, parents should be aware that some information may also need to be shared with others in the School in order to resolve the problem; where appropriate, the School will consult parents first about this.

Parents often worry that complaints made by them in good faith may rebound adversely on their children: The School acknowledges that this would be entirely unacceptable and would take seriously any indication that this might be happening.

The School cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint and, possibly, also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk, or it became necessary to refer matters to the police.

Subject to the above, correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requires access to them.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of any complaint will be handled confidentially within the School.

Anonymous complaints will not be pursued other than in exceptional circumstances.

Other Relevant Bodies

The School hopes that through this policy it will be able to satisfy the concerns of any parents. If it does not, if the matter concerns welfare issues involving abuse by an adult, parents may contact the Designated Officer for Allegations from Wiltshire Council, the contact number for whom is listed in the Safeguarding Policy. Alternatively, students and their parents who have a complaint about welfare may contact the Children's Commissioner about their concerns on telephone 0800 528 0731 or via the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk.

If parents are unsatisfied with the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, they can contact OSFTED and/or ISI, as follows:

OFSTED can be contacted at: OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. Alternatively, OFSTED can be emailed at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or parents can telephone 0300 123 4666.

ISI can be contacted at: Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

Alternatively, ISI can be emailed at concerns@isi.net or parents can telephone 0207 600 0100.

Any record of complaints about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

If the parents' complaint is about boarding and the School has not resolved the matter to their satisfaction, parents may contact ISI, as above.

Conclusion

The School recognises and acknowledges the entitlement of parents to complain and will always endeavour to work with parents in the best interests of the children in its care.