



LAURUS
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TRUST

Complaints Procedure - Secondary

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Procedures for dealing with complaints

In the Laurus Trust, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We do however recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents/carers may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

This policy is available to parents/carers of students and prospective students.

The schools in the Laurus Trust will not respond to anonymous complaints unless issues of child protection are raised. Should a complaint be raised that doesn't fall within our procedure, parents/carers will be informed who they should go to, to direct their complaint.

1) INFORMAL STAGES

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned. Alternatively, parents/carers can write to a member of staff outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint/issue raised by a parent or carer must be put in writing clearly outlining all the issues. The school will provide a written response to the complaint within 10 school days. This may involve the school inviting parents/carers to come into school to discuss the issue or incident.

Informal complaints should firstly be directed towards the relevant form tutor, subject teacher or appropriate member of staff.

If the complaint is still unresolved it should then be taken to the relevant Subject Leader, Head of Year, Head of House or appropriate member of staff.

If this does not lead to a successful resolution the complaint should be taken to the relevant senior member of staff with responsibility for that area of work in school.

2) FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal stages;

Stage 1

If a parent/carers is still dissatisfied after the informal stages, they can refer the matter to the Headteacher. This should be done in writing and received within 15 school days after the informal stage. This written response should detail why the parent/carers is still dissatisfied after the earlier discussion with the appropriate member of school staff.

The Headteacher will deal with the complaint and, if appropriate, will offer a meeting to the parent/carers at a mutually convenient time.

The Headteacher may need to speak to other staff and students to investigate the concerns before writing a response. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Headteacher should inform the parent/carers that this will take longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Headteacher should, however, give written notice of a realistic timescale for the complaint to be responded to.

Stage 2

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, after the involvement of the Headteacher, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This must be in writing to the Chair at the school address and received within 15 school days. This complaint must specify the unresolved issue and the complainant's preferred outcome.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors without going through Stage 1. The Chair of Governors will ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

If appropriate, the Chair of Governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it will take longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Governors should, however, give written notice of a realistic timescale for the complaint to be responded to.

Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or the Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a Complaints Committee to consider the complaint. The Chair of Governors will decide if this is appropriate.

The Complaints Committee will only be convened if the Chair of Governors is unable to provide a mutually acceptable resolution.

Whilst a Complaints Committee can be called it will only be convened as a last resort when all other avenues have been explored.

The Chair of Governors can elect to appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial, so if the investigating officer is another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated Complaints Committee.

The Complaints Committee must comprise of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the Governance, management and running of the school. The Complaints Committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. Meeting notes will be taken by the Clerk to Governors and these notes will be used by the committee as a basis for their decision making.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within 15 school days following the meeting, together with the reasons for their decision.

If after this school based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log which will indicate at which stage the complaint was resolved. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential.

It should be noted that the school will not consider complaints made later than the end of the second term after an incident/issue has occurred.

Each school has a right and a duty to protect its employees from complaints that are malicious, personally offensive, including obscenities, racist or homophobic language. Problems arise where a complaint is unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to exact retribution for some real or imagined wrong. We reserve the right not to deal with such complaints. The decision not to consider a complaint of this nature will be taken by the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair of Governors along with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Schools reserves the right to limit the method of contact of such complaints and restrict who the complainant may communicate with in school.

The school also reserves the right not to consider a complaint that has been re-submitted with only minor differences after we have addressed the complaint.