

The Edinburgh Academy
Complaints Policy and
Procedure

August 2017

Introduction

At all times at the Edinburgh Academy, we seek to ensure that all our pupils thrive in a caring and nurturing environment where they feel emotionally secure and motivated to do their best. In doing this, we are constantly seeking to balance the development of the individual with the management of the whole in a happy atmosphere.

In establishing the feeling of being part of the Academy 'family', we encourage our parents to take an active part in their child's education and to work with us for the development of all of our children.

In seeking to engender a culture of respect, we expect good conduct from all members of the school community. Our Partnership with Parents Policy (Appendix 1) has been carefully written to allow for an understanding of expectations and is published in the annual Parents Handbook.

An Open Organisation

On occasion, decisions taken or actions arising within the School will not always be popular and may in some cases be a cause for concern. Anyone who has a concern or complaint should feel that this can be voiced, and that they will obtain a prompt response and fair hearing to any complaint they make. It is hoped that most concerns can be sorted out quickly and informally by speaking to the appropriate member of staff.

While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children, there are issues which pupils may choose to raise on their own behalf, and which indeed are best raised by them. At the Edinburgh Academy our pastoral teams know the children very well and in both the Junior and Senior schools, there are procedures in place which enable pupils to express concerns or to make complaints.

Any concern raised or complaints made are dealt with in a professional and sensitive manner. It is absolutely clear in this policy that these will not rebound adversely on the complainant. Similarly, pupils can be assured that they will not be adversely affected or treated unfairly if their parents make a complaint.

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is likely to require discussion, perhaps involving teacher, pupil and parent, and it is hoped that it can be resolved quickly by such a discussion and appropriate action. If this does not resolve the concern, then it could become a complaint.

In all cases it is our aim to address concerns or complaints promptly, as when allowed to fester, these can develop into confrontations. It is our aim that an acknowledgement of a concern or complaint will be forthcoming within 48 working hours.

Complaints from Members of the Public

Complaints from members of the public are treated in a similar way to complaints from parents. Most complaints from the public are referred directly to a senior member of staff, the Headteacher, Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) or Rector. Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils can usually be dealt with expeditiously with reminders to all pupils about the School's code of conduct and expectations of its pupils

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may come from members of the public, from parents or from pupils, with no indication of either name or address, or from complainants who do not wish to be identified. Normally these will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Parents and pupils should be encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality (see below). If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher, Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) or Rector's discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint. Anonymous complaints are recorded.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue for pupils, parents and staff and it is essential that all complaints are treated in confidence and in a professional and sensitive manner.

Parents

Parents should be assured that knowledge of their complaint will be limited to the relevant senior manager and to those directly involved. In some serious instances, the Chairman of the Court of Directors may need to be informed.

Of course, on some occasions it may be necessary to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint. This would happen, for example, if a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. All our staff are trained in dealing with issues of Child Protection and the Headteacher (Nursery and Junior School) and Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) (Senior School) are trained at the highest level of Child Protection. This is in line with the SCIS Child Protection Guidelines and the 'Getting it Right for Every Child legislation (GIRFEC)'.

Pupils

Pupils can also be assured that staff will respect their confidentiality (except where Child Protection is an issue) and that their complaint or concern will only be shared with those directly involved.

Staff

Staff members may be concerned if complaints are made against them. Such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who have to be consulted. The School will support staff who are the subject of a complaint whilst an investigation is undertaken. In extreme cases, members of staff may be temporarily relieved of their duties as part of this support mechanism.

If a matter needs to be dealt with under staff disciplinary or other internal procedures, it must be understood by parents that details cannot be given, as the matter has to remain confidential.

Procedures

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

1. Please note that it is always possible for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis.
2. All complaints will normally be dealt with in the first instance by the member of staff deemed to be most directly involved with the subject of the complaint. The Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) will be kept informed.
3. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, then it progresses to the next stage, when it becomes a formal complaint and is reported in writing.
4. It is expected that informal complaints will be acknowledged within 48 term-time working hours. A period of no longer than 10 term-time working days should cover the period from the complaint first being lodged to its final response.
5. A Parent Contact Sheet (Appendix 2) should always be completed and filed with the Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel).

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

1. If the complaint cannot be dealt with informally, or if a parent/guardian or pupil consider that their concern is sufficiently serious to warrant a formal complaint at a senior level, then a formal complaint should be made in writing to the appropriate member of staff and copied to the Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel). Unless the complaint refers directly to the Rector, the Rector should not be involved in any investigation or resolution at this point.

2. The member of staff will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 5 days of receipt, and either refer it directly to the Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel), or consult with all those directly concerned and aim to deal with the complaint directly within 10 to 14 days of receipt of the formal letter of complaint itself.
3. The colleague dealing with the complaint will also meet with the complainant, and following any necessary investigation or actions thereafter, provide a written response to the complaint, copied to the SMT.
4. If the complaint is not dealt with directly by the Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) and if it cannot be resolved, then it will be handed over to the appropriate one who will deal with it directly within 7 days of first being notified that it has not been resolved (notified by either the complainant or the colleague dealing with it).
5. If the Headteacher or Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel)'s resolution is not deemed satisfactory by the complainant, the Rector will act as the next line of appeal and all previous investigation paperwork will be passed over to him for consideration. The Rector will deal with it within 7 days of first being notified that it has not been resolved (notified by either the complainant or the colleague dealing with it).
6. In exceptional circumstances, if the complaint cannot be resolved by the Rector, then he will advise the complainant of the next stage, which is to have the complaint heard before a panel appointed by the Chairman of the Court.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

1. If the parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 2 above, they will then be invited to write to the Clerk to the Court (at the School address) requesting a Panel Hearing. The request for a Panel Hearing must be made as soon as possible and in any event within 7 days of the decision in Stage 2 of the complaint being notified to the parents.
2. The Clerk will notify the Chairman of the Court within 7 days of receipt of the letter of complaint.
3. The Chairman of the Court will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint within 21 days of the Chairman being notified by the Clerk. This panel will always have at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and running of the School.
4. Parents may attend and be accompanied at a Panel Hearing if they wish.
5. The panel will also consider the SMT response and carry out any further investigations/interviews as appropriate.
6. The panel will aim to reach a final decision on the complaint and recommend appropriate action as quickly as possible and normally within 7 days (and no longer than 14 days) after the Panel Hearing.
7. The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and give a copy to the complainant, the Headteacher, Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) or Rector, and where relevant, the person complained about. This will normally be sent out within 21 days of the Panel Hearing. A copy will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Court. The Chairman will also report on the case at the next meeting of the Court of Directors.
8. If an agreement is not reached, and if a complaint cannot be resolved at this stage, the parents may choose to seek legal advice or advice from an appropriate external body such as the Registrar of Independent Schools in the Scottish Government or Scottish Care Inspectorate.

The Edinburgh Academy

Partnership with Parents Policy

The Edinburgh Academy operates in the interest and for the long-term benefit of all the children who attend. Our actions are aimed with the children's education and welfare in mind. Decisions may not always be popular, and in some individual circumstances, may cause inconvenience or disappointment to parents. However, the School's continuing focus is to promote the effective development of the individual pupil, whilst managing the School environment as a happy community underpinned by our Vision and Values.

We aim to achieve the following:

1. To encourage parents to take an active part in their children's education, working with staff to promote children's all round personal development.
2. To respond promptly and professionally to parental enquiries and concerns. This will usually be done through the Classteacher or through the appropriate Head of Department at the Junior School or the Head of Years (Transition, Middle Years, Sixth Form) at the Senior School.
3. We expect parents to attend Parent Evenings, or other meetings with staff, that relate to their child's progress. These include evenings that may help them become better informed about their child's development and the educational and social issues which pupils face as they grow up.
4. We hope that parents will try to attend events which their children are involved in whether on the sports field, on the stage, or in the concert hall. These are generally advertised on the School website, in term calendars, or by invitation through letters and/or emails. We publish guidelines to pupils and parents on our sporting ethos in the Games Handbook, outlining our approach to fair play and good sportsmanship, and appropriate forms of spectator support.
5. We expect parents to support us in our decisions. These are made to help pupils fit within our high expectations of them, and to encourage them to play a full and active part in all aspects of school life.
6. Some school rules, such as those that govern parking and access to school sites, apply to parents rather than to children, and we expect parents to adhere to these in the interest of the smooth running of the School and to provide an appropriate example to pupils at the School.
7. There may be times when parents do not agree with the School's decision on a particular issue, or on our management of a matter relating to their child. In such cases, parents may make an informal or formal complaint as per our Complaints Policy, or bring their concern to the attention of a senior pastoral leader (in the Junior School, the Head of Department and in the Senior School, the Head of Transition for Geits and 2nds, the Head of Middle Years for 3rds to 5ths, or the Director of Sixth Form for 6ths and 7ths), or they can approach the Headteacher of the Junior School or the Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) of the Senior School.
8. While complaints or matters of concern will be investigated and dealt with promptly and professionally, we also expect parents to bring issues to us in the same reasonable and courteous manner with which they expect us to respond.
9. Parents are encouraged to communicate information and queries with the School. This is encouraged, but it is recognised that there must be a balance in expectations. The School cannot respond to excessive requests or vexatious demands made beyond what would be commonly regarded as reasonable. Excessive demands for response by email, telephone or in person will be referred to a senior member of staff, to bring a balance back to levels and forms of communication being expected.

10. We will not tolerate rude or offensive remarks or behaviour, and any such incidents will be referred to the Headteacher of the Junior School or the Deputy Rector (Pastoral & Personnel) of the Senior School, following which to the Rector, if the matter has not been resolved.
11. Above all else, it is vital that parents and staff work together to act as role models for pupils and support each other in our common aim to turn out independent, confident and thoughtful young people.

BG Welsh
Rector
August 2017

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Please detail who you spoke to and what the response was.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? Please attach a separate blank sheet if you require more space.

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please detail below.

Signature of Complainant		Date
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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Received in the first instance by:	Signed	Print
Acknowledgement sent		
Complaint referred to:		