



## DAUNTSEY'S SCHOOL

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### **Introduction**

Dauntsey's School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, parents can expect any complaint to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure. Dauntsey's School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. Dauntsey's School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents and may only be used by parents of current pupils.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Dauntsey's School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

#### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

#### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time, and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

#### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

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

- In the first instance, parents should normally contact their son or daughter's Housemaster/Housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult a Head of Department, a member of the Senior Management Team or the Head Master.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Senior Management Team or the Head Master will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress unless it is deemed appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Housemaster/Housemistress will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the Housemaster/Housemistress 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.
- If the complaint is against the Head Master, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head Master. The Head Master will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head Master will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head Master to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
  - All such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
- Once the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Master will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head Master, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head Master and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to an independent convenor (who ordinarily will be the Clerk to the Governors), who will be appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- Parents invoking a Stage 3 Hearing must set out in writing the nature of their complaint, their reasons as to why they are dissatisfied with the manner in which it has been dealt with and the resolution that they seek.
- The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons (a) two of whom may be Governors, who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and (b) one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The selection of the complaints panel will be made by the Clerk to the Governors.
- The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations is available for inspection on the School premises by the Governors and the Head Master.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution, the School will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will be kept containing the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the 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)
- Action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

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 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

*The number of formal complaints received and dealt with by the Head Master during the preceding academic year 2017-18 was nil.*

Bursar

Reviewed: November 2020

Next Review: November 2021