



## **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

### **Introduction**

The Cedars prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its boys. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure.

Our Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of current pupils via the school website and/or hard copies on request. This procedure covers complaints made by the parents of current pupils (or former pupils if relating to when they were pupils). It does not cover exclusions as these are dealt with separately in the School's Behaviour Policy.

### **Definition of terms**

For the purposes of this policy, a 'parent' shall include a guardian, carer or any other person with parental responsibility for a child at the School. This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was on the school roll.

Where time scales are given in 'working days', this is defined as Monday - Friday during term time (the dates of which are available on our website). Complaints received during school holidays will be dealt with as soon as is practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances the complainant will be notified of any extension to the time scales and the reason(s) why an extension is necessary when the complaint is acknowledged.

A written record will be kept by the Headmaster of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld), and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing. Records of individual complaints will be retained for at least seven years thereafter, in accordance with data protection principles, only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

### **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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

### **Stage 1: Informal**

Parents with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, to telephone, or to write with details of the issue that concerns them. In the first instance, it may be best to address a concern to the member of staff most closely involved in the matter at issue (such as the relevant teacher or tutor), who may well be able to resolve the problem quickly: but there may be some concerns which parents prefer to bring directly to the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster.

Any complaint will receive a prompt response: either by immediate discussion (and, it is hoped, resolution) in person or by telephone, or, if wider consultation and/or investigation is required, by letter or email as soon as possible setting out the conclusion of the inquiry, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed. If such action includes use of the staff disciplinary procedures, this will be handled confidentially within the School.

The member of staff receiving a complaint will inform the Headmaster who will make a written record on the form provided. Records of complaints are stored confidentially as a way of providing useful information on matters of concern among parents. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days, or in the event that the member of staff 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 as detailed below.

#### *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality will be observed as far as is consistent with proper investigation and effective handling of a complaint. Parents can rest assured that the making of a complaint will not in any way rebound adversely on their son or daughter.

### **Stage 2: Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and will meet with the parents concerned within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.

The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to give its decision within 15 working days of a formal complaint being made.

### **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

If the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of parents at the conclusion of Stage 2, PACT Educational Trust will make provision for a panel to consider the complaint. Parents

should notify the Trust of their wish to proceed to Stage 3 within 5 working days of the end of Stage 2 by writing to the PACT CEO at the address below.

Notice of intention to proceed to panel hearing should set out fully the reasons for dissatisfaction with the school's response to the original complaint. Any documents or other evidence or details of witness to fact or to character on which the parents intend to rely should be sent to the PACT CEO and no less than 5 working days before the date of the panel hearing.

The panel will be appointed by PACT Educational Trust and shall consist of two Trustees and a third person who shall be completely independent of the management or governance of any school operated by PACT. The members of the panel must not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The hearing shall take place within 15 working days of notice of intention to proceed, unless otherwise agreed by all parties.

The PACT CEO will collect all relevant papers together and ask the headmaster to provide a written response to the complaint.

The parents have the right to attend in person to make oral representations and should inform the PACT CEO in writing of their intention to attend within 5 days of the notification of the date of the hearing. The notification will contain instructions in respect of attendance. If no such request is made, the panel hearing will still take place unless parents indicate that they are now satisfied and no longer wish to proceed.

#### *Conduct of the panel hearing*

- The hearing shall be in private, and everything said at the appeal hearing shall be confidential.
- The panel shall be a full-merits hearing of the original complaint and not merely a check that procedure has been followed.
- Neither the parents nor the Headmaster will be entitled to put before the panel any document or other evidence which was not provided to the panel and the other party at least 5 working days before the hearing date unless the panel shall determine otherwise.
- The parents and the Headmaster may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person whose details must be provided in advance to the PACT CEO, together with a statement of the capacity in which they are attending. This may be a relative, teacher or friend, but legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Such person must undertake to respect the confidentiality of the appeal and shall not have the right to address the appeal hearing, unless expressly invited by the panel.
- The Headmaster or parents must inform the PACT CEO at least 5 working days before the hearing if they wish to call any witness to give evidence detailing the person they wish to attend and the reason for calling them,
- The parents will first set out their case; the Headmaster will respond; and the panel will retire to consider and make its decision.
- Within 5 working days of the hearing, the PACT CEO will write to the parents, the Headmaster and, where relevant, the person complained about, setting out the decision of the panel, the reasons for that decision, and any recommendations made. The panel's

decision shall be final and not subject to further appeal. A statement to this effect will be contained within the letter detailing the decision of the Panel. The panel findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by PACT Educational Trust and the head.

### **Written records**

The School will keep a written record of all complaints including whether they were resolved and detailing any action taken by the School as a result (regardless of whether they were upheld).

### **Other considerations**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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, or where disclosure is required under other legal authority.

The school will make available to parents the number of complaints which reached the formal stage during the preceding academic year. This information can be obtained from the school office on request.

The correspondence address for the PACT CEO is

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This policy will be reviewed every 2 years	
Title	Complaints Policy and Procedure
Version	7
Date of Review	February 2024
Authors	Dominic Rose
Approved by SMT	Yes
Approval/Review required by PACT or sub-committee	Yes
Latest Review (state whether changes were made)	<p>May 2021: Reduction in time window for each stage.</p> <p>April 2022: Minor changes to panel process; clarifying time window; and updating address for correspondence.</p> <p>February 2024: minor changes including change in CEO</p>
Next Review Date	February 2025