

Complaints Procedure

Senior School Complaints Procedure for parents and other carers

(a) It is hoped that, at Aldenham School, the availability of staff and their readiness to listen to pupils will mean that pupils' unhappiness about an issue can quickly be discussed, explained and, if necessary, corrected. If a pupil remains dissatisfied with the answer (s)he receives, there is a complaints procedure for pupils to use – see page 13 – 15. Details of this are available on a small laminated card made available to pupils annually. (In fact, this has very rarely been used.)

In the same way, a pupil's Housemaster or Housemistress is always happy to answer questions and follow up enquiries from parents or guardians. This person is the member of staff concerned with a pupil's academic and pastoral welfare. The Housemaster or Housemistress is best placed to discuss a parent's query or concern with Heads of Departments, other teachers or School staff in order to resolve the matter informally.

If a parent or guardian remains dissatisfied with the results of such an enquiry, they can ask the Housemaster or Housemistress to take the matter further. This will normally result in the matter being passed to a senior member of staff. This may be the Deputy Head, Director of Studies, Senior Master or Head of Sixth Form depending on the issue.

Parents may choose to contact senior members of staff directly, although in such cases, a matter may be firstly passed to another member of staff to comply with School procedures.

(b) If a parent feels an issue remains unresolved, they can ask for the matter to be remitted to the Headmaster (or Deputy Head if they have not previously been involved or if the Headmaster so decides).

In this case, parents must put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster including why they feel the matter continues to be unresolved.

The Headmaster may interview parents and will then initiate such investigations as are appropriate. Parents will be contacted within 7 working days*. This will be by letter or when parents are asked to come and see the Headmaster to discuss the results of the investigations, including the findings, the reasons for these and any action to be taken as a result.

The School continues to review this procedure in line with best practice and current legislation. Please contact the Headmaster's Secretary in case of query or for any further details.

*'Working days' excludes Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. During school holidays, the absence of staff may mean these delays will be longer.

Reviewed August 2009

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

PANEL REVIEW

Request for Review: A pupil or his/her parents, aggrieved at the Head Master's decision, may make a written application for a Panel Review. The application must be received by the Clerk to the Governors, c/o the School, within 72 hours of the decision being notified to a parent, or longer by agreement.

Grounds for Review: In their application the parents must state the grounds on which they are asking for a review and the outcome which they seek.

Review Panel: The Review will be undertaken by a three member panel, one of whom will be independent of the running and management of the School. The other two will normally be Governors. The panel members will have no detailed previous knowledge of the case or of the pupil or parents and will not normally include the Chairman of Governors. Selection of the Review Panel will be made by the Chairman of Governors. Parents will be notified in advance of the names of the panel members. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the panel.

Review Meeting: The meeting will take place at the school premises, normally between 3 and 10 days after the parents' application has been received. A Review will not normally take place during school holidays. A Review Meeting is a private procedure and all those who are concerned in it are required to keep its proceedings confidential, subject to law.

Attendance: Those present at the Review Meeting will normally be:

- i. Members of the Review Panel.
- ii. The Head Master and any relevant member of staff whom the pupil or his/her parents have asked should attend and whom the Head Master considers should attend in order to secure a fair outcome.
- iii. The pupil together with his/her parents and, if they wish, a member of the school staff who is willing to speak on the pupil's behalf. The parents may be accompanied by a friend or relation but not by a legal representative. (The Clerk to the Governors must be given 7 days notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified).

Conduct of Meeting: The meeting will be chaired by one member of the Review Panel and will be conducted in a suitable room and in an informal manner. All statements made at the meeting will be unsworn. The proceedings will not be tape-recorded without the consent of both the Chairman and a parent and any tape-recording will be used only to assist the panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons and will belong to the School. All those present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes. The meeting will be directed by the Chairman who will conduct it so as to ensure that all those present have a reasonable opportunity of asking questions and making appropriate comment. Everyone is expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chairman may at his/her discretion adjourn or terminate the meeting. If the meeting is terminated, the original decision will stand.

Procedure: The Panel will consider each of the questions raised by the pupil or his/her parents so far as relevant to:

- I. In the case of expulsion or removal of the pupil from the School, whether the facts of the case were sufficiently proved, when the decision was taken to expel or remove the pupil. The civil standard of proof, namely, "the balance of probability" will apply; and
- II. in the case of a sanction less than expulsion or removal of the pupil from the School whether the sanction was warranted, that is, whether it was proportionate to the breach of discipline or the other events which are found to have occurred and to the legitimate aims of the School's policy in that respect.

The requirements of natural justice and Human Rights will apply. If for any reason the pupil or his/her parents are dissatisfied with any aspect of the meeting they must inform the Chairman at the time and ask him to note their dissatisfaction and the reasons for it.

Identification: If the Head Master considers it necessary in the interests of an individual or of the School that the identify of any person should be withheld, the Chairman may require that the name of that person and the reasons for withholding it be written down and shown to the Panel Members. The Chairman at his/her discretion may direct that the person be identified, or not as the case may be.

Pupil's Character: Up to two members of the school staff may speak generally about the pupils' character, conduct and achievements at the School if they are willing to do so.

Leaving Status: In the case of expulsion or removal from the School, if having heard all parties, the Panel is minded to confirm the Head Master's earlier decision, it is open to the Panel, with agreement of the Head Master, the pupil and his/her parents to discuss the pupil's leaving status with a view to reaching agreement.

Decision: When the Chairman decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if by then there is not consensus, he may adjourn the meeting; alternatively the Chairman may ask those present to withdraw while the Panel considers its decision. In the absence of a significant procedural irregularity, the decision of the Review Panel will be final. It will be notified, with reasons, to the parents by the Chairman of the Review Panel or the Chairman of Governors by letter or telephone within three days of the meeting.

By Resolution of the Board of Governors

Head Master

Circulation on request: Pupils, parents, staff and the Governors of Aldenham School

Legal Status: Advisory and non-contractual

Policy Date: August 2009

Complaints Procedures- for pupils

Introduction

This procedure is designed for pupils to express and seek redress for treatment which they feel is unfair or unreasonable. It aims to balance the rights of pupils and the support they may need in exercising their rights with the rights of the School, Staff and other pupils. It proceeds by arbitration and reconciliation. It represents therefore a stage separate from formal written complaints attached to the School's disciplinary codes.

The procedure for your worries, concerns & complaints.

1. Every pupil at Aldenham School has the right to be treated fairly by his or her fellow pupils and by members of staff. Treatment by fellow pupils is governed by the School Rules and by the Aldenham School Anti-Bullying Code. The Aldenham School Complaints Procedure is designed to assist pupils who feel that they have been or are being unfairly or wrongly treated by the School, members of staff or other pupils.

What if I am unhappy about something?

2. If you feel unfairly treated by a member of staff you may approach them directly taking another pupil or member of staff with you if you wish. Explain politely but clearly what has dissatisfied you. It may be that through discussion with the member of staff you will obtain an answer or reach an agreement which satisfies you. That is the best way to resolve most concerns.
3. If you do not wish to approach the member of staff directly, you can approach any other member of staff with whom you may discuss the matter and they may give you advice or act as an intermediary on your behalf talking to the member of staff with whom you are in disagreement. You can speak to your House tutor, your Housemaster/Mistress, any teacher of your choice or a non teaching member of staff such as Sister or the Counsellor.

Remember, you should always speak to your Housemaster/mistress if you are unhappy or dissatisfied.

What can I do if I'm still not happy?

4. If you are not satisfied after these discussions or with what may happen as a result of these discussions, you are free to make a complaint.

And don't forget....

5. You may make a complaint according to the procedure below without contacting the person about whom you wish to make a complaint or another member of staff.

How do I make a complaint?

6. If you wish to make a complaint, you may do this either in writing or by speaking directly.

Whom do I complain to?

7. You should go and see or write to the Deputy Head, Mr Williams, to the Senior Master Mr Pulman or to your Housemaster/mistress.

What do I say?

8. You should say in your letter or in your conversation with Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress what has dissatisfied you. You may include any details you think are relevant. Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress may ask you or others to make something clearer. You do not *have* to tell Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress something if you don't want to

What happens then?

9. Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress will then follow up your complaint by speaking to the member of staff or members of staff over whose actions you are dissatisfied. All the details of what you have said will be carefully investigated.

How long will it take?

10. Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress will ask to see you within 2 working school days of when you make your complaint. Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress will tell you what action, if any, they intend to take as a result of your complaint.

What if I'm not happy with the outcome?

11. If you are not happy with what Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress says or with the outcome of your complaint you may ask them to investigate matters differently or again. Alternatively, you may wish to take your complaint to the Headmaster.

What if I'm not happy with what the Headmaster says?

12. If at this stage you are still unhappy with the result of your complaint you may telephone Mrs Debbie Love whose telephone number is situated by all House telephones. Mrs Love is called the 'Independent adult'. It is her function to listen carefully and discuss with any pupil who is unhappy about the outcome of a complaint. If she considers that you have not been fairly dealt with, she will speak to the Headmaster on your behalf.

What if I don't want to come on my own to complain?

13. At any stage of this complaints procedure, you are entitled to be accompanied by a member of staff or another pupil if you wish.

Will a member of staff I complain about know I've complained?

14. When you complain about a member of staff, you do not have to tell the member of staff that you have made a complaint about them. Tell Mr Williams, Mr Pulman or your Housemaster/mistress this but don't forget they may need to tell the person you're complaining about in order to investigate things properly.

What will other people say if I decide to complain?

15. Every pupil at Aldenham School has the right to use this complaints procedure. As a pupil member of the School you will not in any way be criticised if you use the complaints procedure fairly and genuinely. It is your right to do so and your right to have your worries followed up.

What sort of things are we talking about in all this?

- A sanction unfairly administered.
- A member of staff whose attitude towards you seems consistently unfair
- The way you have been treated by the School or by a member of staff
- The way you have been treated in an investigation which has had to be conducted in a disciplinary matter
- Other situations in which you feel unfairly or inappropriately treated