



## **POLICY 3**

### **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Policy reviewed by	Headmistress
Date reviewed	Michaelmas 2023
Governors' Committee	Full Board
Approval / Oversight	Approval
Next review date	Michaelmas 2024

# TRURO HIGH SCHOOL

## COMPLAINTS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Truro High School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and the pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents/carers do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with the procedures described below. Parents/Carers can rest assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A pupil will never be penalised for a complaint raised by a parent in good faith.
- 1.2** This policy is only applicable to current pupils, including those in the EYFS and Boarding. This policy is available on the School's website or on request from the Head's Executive Assistant.
- 1.3** The policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
  - Rewards and Sanctions Policy
  - Data Retention Policy
- 1.4** This procedure is available to all parents/carers of pupils at Truro High School. It is also available to prospective parents/carers in the matter of application for admission.
- 1.5** Parents/Carers are asked to inform the School of their complaint as soon as possible: it is very difficult for the School to investigate properly an incident or problem which took place some time ago. The complaint should be stated in writing, by email or in person.
- 1.6** The School has a three-stage process for complaints which is set out below.
- 1.7** The School will always try to resolve complaints quickly. Timescales for each stage of the process are set out below and are applicable during term-time. It is possible that complaints raised at the end of a term may exceed these timescales if staff and pupils are not available until the start of the following term.
- 1.8** With the exception of complaints relating to safeguarding and child protection, the School will not accept complaints made anonymously.
- 1.9** ***Child protection***  
Concerns regarding safeguarding and child protection are dealt with under a separate procedure. Please refer to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (available on the School's website or from the Head's EA). A concern regarding safeguarding or child protection should be raised with the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Katie Hinks, or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, Miss Deb Freeman, Mrs Dawn Kingston and Dr Liz Dollins.

### **1.10 *Appeals against exclusion***

Appeals against exclusion are heard under a separate procedure, explained in Appendix 1 of the School's Rewards and Sanctions Policy, which is available on the website or on request from the Head's PA.

### **1.11 *The role of the Headmistress***

The Headmistress should not typically be the first port-of-call, if a parent has a concern or complaint (see 2.2 below).

## **2. STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

**2.1** It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

**2.2** If parents/carers have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's class teacher in the Prep School or form tutor in the Senior School. If the complaint is a boarding issue, parents/carers should contact their daughter's Housemistress. In many cases, the matter should be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents'/carers' satisfaction. If this member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

**2.3** Complaints made directly to a Head of Faculty / the Deputy Heads / the Head of Prep / the Headmistress will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher / form tutor / Housemistress, unless the Head of Faculty / the Deputy Heads / the Head of Prep / the Headmistress deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

**2.4** Should the matter not be resolved (normally within **10 working days**) or in the event that the class teacher / form tutor / Housemistress and the parent/carer fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent/carer will be advised to proceed with his/her concern in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## **3. STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION**

**3.1** If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis or parents/carers believe that their complaint is sufficiently serious, they should put it in writing to the Headmistress. She will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. It is important that at the start of this stage parents/carers set out the nature of their complaint in full and outline any evidence upon which they intend to rely and the outcome they would like to achieve.

**3.2** In most cases, the Headmistress will meet and speak to parents/carers, normally within **6 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

**3.3** It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations. The Headmistress will normally delegate responsibility for undertaking an investigation to another member of the Senior Leadership Team. Therefore, parents/carers may be asked to meet with the investigator for a further discussion of the problem. The member of the Senior Leadership Team will carry out a full investigation of the complaint and may interview staff and other pupils involved. A written record of all such meetings and interviews will be kept in relation to the complaint.

- 3.4** Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing, normally within **10 working days**. The Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.
- 3.5** If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- 3.6** If parents'/carers' complaint is about the Headmistress, they can refer it to the Chair of Governors. They can contact him by writing c/o Clerk to the Governors at the school address, stating clearly that they are making a complaint. Please note that general complaints about the School, or any everyday management decision the Headmistress has made, should be addressed to the Headmistress in the first instance and not to the Chair of Governors.

#### **4. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE HEAD**

- 4.1** In the event that the complaint is about the Headmistress, the matter will be dealt with at Stage 2, following the procedures outlined above, but with the Chair of Governors taking the place of the Headmistress.

#### **5. STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING**

- 5.1** If the matter is still not resolved to the parents'/carers' satisfaction, they may wish to proceed to Stage 3 and ask for their complaint to be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Clerk to the Governors has been appointed by the Governors to arrange hearings by the panel. The appeal must be made in writing, stating that a request for a panel hearing is being made. The appeal should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and sent to him c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the school address. The appeal must be lodged within **10 working days** of the date of the School's decision made in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure. Parents/Carers should provide a list of their complaints made against the School which they believe have not been resolved satisfactorily by the Stage 2 procedure. They should also state whether they wish to attend the hearing, or whether the panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions.
- 5.2** The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The panel members will be selected by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within **10 working days**.
- 5.3** Parents/Carers may request to attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. The Headmistress will also attend the hearing and may bring a colleague (normally the member of the Senior Leadership Team who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 above).
- 5.4** Prior to the start of the hearing, the panel will appoint a Chair to preside at the hearing. Decisions will normally be unanimous, but if unanimity cannot be reached, a simple

majority will prevail. If there is an equality of votes, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

- 5.5** 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 not later than **3 days** prior to the hearing.
- 5.6** If possible, the panel will resolve the parents'/carers' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 5.7** Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how this should be carried out and the manner in which it shall be presented. After due consideration of all the facts the panel will reach a decision as to whether the complaint is justified and may make recommendations as to what action should be taken. If the panel's decision, and recommendations, are not made at the hearing, the decision and recommendations shall be made within **3 working days** of the hearing. The decision of the panel will be final.
- 5.8** The Chair of the panel will write to the complainant, and where applicable the person complained about, of the panel's findings and recommendations, as soon as possible following the completion of the hearing and in any event within **10 working days** of it. Particulars of the complaint and the panel's decision upon it will be made available to the Headmistress and the proprietor, and reported to the Governing Body of the School no later than the meeting of that body which next follows the hearing.

## **6. COMPLAINTS ABOUT A GOVERNOR**

- 6.1** In the event the complaint is about a Governor of the school, the procedure at Stage 1 and Stage 2 will be followed as outlined in points 2 and 3 above. Any complaint about a Governor should first be raised with the Headmistress, who will discuss it with the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, the Headmistress will discuss the matter with a representative of the GSA or AGBIS.
- 6.2** In the event that a complaint about a Governor of the school reaches Stage 3, the panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The panel members will be selected by the Chair of Governors. The procedure will be as outlined above.
- 6.3** In the event the complaint is about the Chair of the Governors, the panel members will be selected by the GSA/ AGBIS in consultation with the Headmistress. The procedure will be as outlined above.
- 6.4** The time scales outlined in this policy shall also apply when a complaint is made about a Governor.

## **7 ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

- 7.1** If the complaint is not upheld, the Chair's letter will signpost the parents/carers towards a certified Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider stating whether or not the School intends to use ADR in this particular instance.
- 7.2** Use of ADR by schools and parents/carers is voluntary; however schools must provide information to parents/carers even if they do not intend to use ADR. ADR decisions will be binding on the School where this is agreed between the ADR provider and the School.

## **8. COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE WELFARE OF BOARDERS**

- 8.1** Complaints about the welfare of boarders should follow the procedures above.

## **9. TREATMENT OF COMPLAINTS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS**

- 9.1** A written record of all Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints and actions taken by the School as a result of them will be kept and shall include the date on which each complaint is received, details of all meetings and interviews and whether the complaint was resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a hearing.
- 9.2** All complaints will be dealt with confidentially and likewise all correspondence and records will be confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection, requests access to them.

## **10. CONTACT WITH OFSTED OR THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

- 10.1** Parents/Carers who have complaints about welfare of pupils which have not been satisfied by the above procedures may refer those complaints to: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231. ISI can also be contacted at: Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; tel 0207 600 0100.
- 10.2** Any written complaints relating to the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements should follow the procedures above within the 28 days specified in the EYFS Statutory Framework. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they should refer their complaint to OFSTED or ISI.

## **11. RECORD OF COMPLAINTS**

- 11.1** Parents/Carers are entitled to know the number of complaints registered under a formal procedure in the previous academic year. The School defines such complaints as those which have reached at least Stage 2.
- 11.2** One complaint at Stage 2 or 3 was registered in 2022/23 academic year.
- 11.3** Any record of complaints is kept for at least three years.