



Complaints Policy

Complaints Policy and Procedure (Whole School including Boarding & EYFS)

Mission Statement

‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’

Introduction

The quality of our teaching, pastoral care and community life enables us to fulfil our mission statement, ‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’. Our school Mission Statement underpins everything we do and everything we are at Thornton. Our school is a community founded on Christ and we therefore try to uphold the Gospel values of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. Our Complaints Procedure holds this aim to the fore. A speedy resolution of potentially difficult or conflict situations is desirable, and our procedures are carried out in a spirit of concern for all involved. Therefore, if parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Procedure

Thornton College prides itself in working in partnership with parents, students and staff to encourage positive relationships. We do recognise that from time to time, parents have concerns, which they, quite correctly, need to communicate with school. A complaint is not the same as a concern but both need to be addressed and are in the scope of the procedure. A complaint is an expression of a grievance or resentment where the parent is seeking redress or justice. Any matter about which a parent or student is unhappy and about which they seek action in a written form will be treated as a complaint and will be logged appropriately. The complaints policy is available on our website for parents. There are three stages to this procedure, as outlined below. Records of complaints, including regarding our EYFS provision, will be kept on file for seven years. The written record of complaints (on CPOMS) will be made available to inspectors, together with the action taken. Any complaint that is received in writing and taken to a panel hearing is regarded as a formal complaint. Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is made in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate the matter to the formal stage.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child’s Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the member of staff to consult the Head of Year in the Senior School, or the Head of Prep for the Prep School, who will investigate the matter.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Headteacher (that are not formal) will usually be referred to the relevant child’s Class Teacher, Form Tutor, Housemistress or Head of Year, unless the Deputy Head or the Headteacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The child’s Class Teacher, Form Tutor, Housemistress or Head of Year will record details of all complaints on Cpoms under ‘Stage 1 – informal complaint’ and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved, normally within ten days during term time or in the event that the child’s Class Teacher, Form Tutor, Housemistress or Head of Year 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

within three school weeks. Outside of term time, the matter would normally be resolved within three weeks unless it is not possible to contact those involved in the matter, in which case parents will be notified.

- Should the parent/ guardian refuse to accept the resolution as offered and evidenced by the school and fail or refuse to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure within three school weeks, the school will declare the issue concluded, in accordance with their investigation and findings.

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 Headteacher, giving clear details of the situation and stating that they wish to make a formal complaint. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations or to appoint someone else to do this, usually the Deputy Head or a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- The Deputy Headteacher / member of SLT will log details of all complaints and investigations on CPOMS
- Once the Deputy Headteacher / member of SLT is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the Head Teacher, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for their decision.
- Parents should expect to receive a conclusion to their complaint normally within 10 days of the formal notification during term time, although this may be extended if further investigations are required. Outside of term time, the matter would normally be resolved within three weeks unless it is not possible to contact those involved in the matter, in which case parents will be notified.
- Records of complaints received will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within six school weeks.
- Where parents are not satisfied with the school's response to their complaint at Stage 2 and indicate a wish to continue to Stage 3, for compliance purposes the panel will go ahead unless the parents later indicate they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
- A panel hearing will proceed notwithstanding that a parent may subsequently decide not to attend. The school will ensure that arrangements for the Panel Hearing are reasonable to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance. The panel will consider the parent's complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

Stage 3 – Formal resolution - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who has the authority to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- This stage involves a full- merits hearing of the complaint, not just a judicial review-style check that procedure was correctly followed.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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. This member should be outside the school's workforce, not a member of the governing body and not otherwise involved with the management of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors (or the Vice Chair of Governors in the absence of the Chair). The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable

and normally within three weeks. Outside of term time, the matter would normally be resolved within three weeks unless it is not possible to contact those involved in the matter, in which case parents will be notified.

- 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, usually not later than three school days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete, normally within ten school days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. [The decision of the Panel will be final.] The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headteacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. The findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head Teacher.

Confidentiality

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.

Exclusion

In case of a complaint regarding the exclusions process, parents may contact the Deputy Head directly. They may obtain a copy of the policy and procedures regarding exclusions and subsequent appeals, from the PA to the Headteacher.

Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate

The school is inspected by ISI. Parents and students have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a student's welfare. ISI will usually expect parents or students to have followed the school's formal complaints procedure before contacting them.

Concerns

Parents can report their complaints or concerns to ISI by ringing them on:- 020 7600 0100 or writing to the ISI regional office at:-

Complaints
Independent Schools Inspectorate
1st Floor
Cap House
9-12, Long Lane,
London
EC 1A 9HA

Email: concerns@isi.net

The Department for Education may be contacted on 0370 000 2288 or online.

The school will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of complaints, the action which was taken as a result of each complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld); and whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing. The school will provide parents with details on request (trobinson@thorntoncollege.com) of the number of formal complaints in any one school year.

EYFS

For complaints involving EYFS, details for parents/carers of how to contact OFSTED and ISI are made available in the EYFS Policy and the same information is sent by email to parents. We will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within twenty-eight days of having received the complaint. **The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted on request.**

If parents/carers believe that the EYFS department at Thornton is not meeting the EYFS requirements, they can register their complaints or concerns by contacting Ofsted:

Telephone - 0300 123 4234

Email – enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Parents can also contact Ofsted in writing:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

The school is inspected by ISI. If parents believe that the EYFS requirements are not being met they are also invited to contact ISI:

Parents can register their complaints or concerns to ISI by ringing them on – 020 7600 0100 or writing to the ISI regional office at:-

Complaints
Independent Schools Inspectorate
1st Floor
Cap House
9-12, Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Email: concerns@isi.net

Boarders

Complaints which involve boarders will be identified as such when they are recorded.

Complaints Against the Headteacher

In the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, someone other than the Chair of Governors should be called upon to investigate the matter. In this instance, the Chair of Governors should appoint another Governor, or an appropriate individual from outside school to carry out the investigation

Record Keeping

At Stage 1, (Informal Resolution), parental contact is logged on CPOMS as 'Stage 1 – Informal Complaint'. When Stage 2 is reached and a letter of complaint is received by the Headteacher, it is then logged as a 'Stage 2 – Formal Complaint'.

In accordance with DfE guidelines, records of Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications should be retained for a minimum of seven years (a period determined by the six year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances) Where there is a safeguarding issue involved, records concerning allegations of abuse, should be preserved for the term of the independent enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age, or for ten years from the date of the allegation, if it is longer.

Persistent Correspondence

When repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered in all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

For a complaints procedure to be fair, it must be fair to both the complainant and the College.

I) Fairness to the complainant consists in the provision of a structured complaints procedure which allows the complainant to gain a full hearing at the level they feel their complaint requires, be it informal or formal, and to inform of other recourses the complainant has a right to have.

II) Fairness to the College consists in the recognition by the complainant that the complaints procedure as outlined above offers every reasonable avenue for the pursuit of a full hearing, and thus that the College and its staff should be protected from ways of complaining which fall outside of this. A matter not taken through the appropriate channels is a matter closed.

Student Complaints

Procedures for Student complaints are outlined in the Student School Planners as below.

Should you wish to make a complaint about something at school, this is what you should do:

Stage 1

Talk to your Form Tutor about your complaint. The majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage because your Form Tutor will listen to what you have to say and will try their very best to support you and to offer solutions.

Stage 2

Should you be unhappy with the response of your Form Tutor or you are not satisfied with the resolution proposed, talk to your Head of Year. They will discuss the action taken or suggestions made so far and investigate whether any further action is possible.

Stage 3

The third stage is an official complaint and will be recorded as such. At this stage, you should write or email formally to Ms Wilks, Deputy Head and DSL, outlining your complaint. Ms Wilks, Deputy Head and DSL will record the complaint and speak to your Form Tutor and your Head of Year to discuss and record the support and proposals offered to date. Ms Wilks, Deputy Head and DSL will normally speak to you within two school days to confirm that an investigation is taking place.

- Usually within 10 school days you will be invited to talk the matter through with Ms Wilks, Deputy Head and DSL. You may take a member of staff or your parents/guardians to the meeting.
- Following the initial meeting, you will be invited back to speak to Ms Wilks, Deputy Head and DSL – again you may have a member of staff or your parents/guardians with you. You will be advised as to the outcome of the complaint and offered support and advice on the best course of action to take.

Stage 4

Should you feel it is not resolved at the third stage, you should write or email formally to the Head Teacher, Dr Shaw, outlining your complaint. Dr Shaw will record the details and investigate the matter further. Dr Shaw will speak to you usually within two school days to confirm that an investigation is taking place.

- Normally within 10 school days you will be invited to talk the matter through with Dr Shaw. You may take a member of staff or your parents/Guardians to the meeting.
- Following the initial meeting, you will be invited back to speak to Dr Shaw – again you may have a member to staff with you or your parents/guardians with you. You will be advised as to the outcome of the complaint and offered support and advice on the best course of action to take.

Please contact the Head Teachers PA on trobinson@thorntoncollege.com for details on the number of formal complaints logged in the academic year.

FLOWCHART SUMMARY OF PARENT / GUARDIAN COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 – Informal

Complaint at school level – Complainant should try to resolve the problem with a member of the school staff. (Class Teacher, Form Tutor Housemistress, Head of Year, Head of Prep or Director of Studies)



Resolved?



YES, No further action.

NO. Complainant told how to move on to the formal stage of the procedure.



Stage 2 – Formal

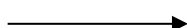
Complaint to Headteacher in writing within three school weeks.



Headteacher reviews / investigates further / appoints a member of the Senior Leadership Team to investigate further and writes to complainant giving a decision on the investigation..



Resolved?



YES, No further action.



NO. Parent/member of public told how to move Stage 3 of the procedure.



Stage 3 – Formal Panel Hearing

Complaint to Governing Body. Complainant to write to Chair of Governors within three school weeks



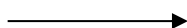
Members appointed and hearing scheduled .



Governing Body write to complainant. .



Resolved?



YES, No further action.



NO. Complainant may decide to write to ISI (Day and Boarding Students).

Parents should always contact the Form Tutor/ Class Teacher/Housemistress/Head of Year in the first instance. There is only one exception to this rule;

If the matter involves a member of staff

In this case, parents should contact the Deputy Head.