



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Committee Responsible: School Committee (RCh)

Reviewed by: The Head

Adopted by Committee: September 2010

Last Committee review: March 2022

Revised annually by School: August 2024

Next annual review due: August 2025

**Date of next formal review
by School Committee:** March 2025

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Sibford School Complaints Policy applies to Sibford Senior School, both day and boarding, and Sibford Junior School, including our Early Years and Foundation Stage. The procedures described comply with the requirements of Part 7 of Schedule 1 to the ISS Regulations. In accordance with, and beyond the requirements of, these regulations, Sibford School makes all of its policies available to parents and prospective parents on the public area of the School's website – www.sibfordschool.co.uk; printed copies can be made available on request to the Head or viewed in School.

Introduction

Sibford School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if current parents or guardians do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy, except when a complaint involves Safeguarding, in which case the Safeguarding Policy should be referred to. In all other cases:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Tutor or Boarding House Parent as appropriate.
- All complaints must be raised as soon as possible and, at the latest within three months of the incident or if a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of those incidents. Complaints made outside of this time will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor/Boarding House Parent cannot resolve the matter alone at this stage, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a line manager or senior colleague.
- Complaints should be made in the first instance to the Form Tutor or Boarding House Parent unless it is deemed appropriate that the matter should be considered by a more senior colleague. It may be necessary for a colleague to re-direct the complaint to another colleague; in such circumstances the complainant will be kept fully informed about who is handling the complaint.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, an Assistant Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor/Boarding House Parent unless the Head of Department, Assistant Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor/Boarding House Parent, or senior colleague, 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 10 working days or in the event that the Form Tutor/Boarding House Parent 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 policy.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Clerk of School Committee (Clerk@sibfordschool.co.uk). Informally the Head may hear a complaint directly and try to resolve it before formally raising with Committee.

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 Head.
- Parents should clearly set out their reasons for moving to Stage 2 – Formal Resolution.
- The Head will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing.
- The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will arrange to meet with the parent(s) concerned, normally within 10 working 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 to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 will also give reasons for the decision taken.
- If the complaint is against the Head and has not been resolved informally, the complaint should be made to the Clerk of School Committee (Clerk@sibfordschool.co.uk). The Clerk or their nominee (usually a Nominated Complaints Lead Governor) will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Clerk or their nominee 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 Clerk or their nominee 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 Clerk or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this policy.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parent(s) seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should let the Head know, or contact the Clerk of School Committee (Clerk@sibfordschool.co.uk).
- The Head or Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 days.
- The complaint will be referred to the Convenor, the Nominated Complaints Lead Governor (or another appropriate member of School Committee in his/her absence), who has been authorised by School Committee to convene the Complaints Panel.
- The Convenor, in consultation with the Clerk, will appoint a Complaints Panel which will consist of at least two Committee members (who have not been directly involved

in matters detailed in the complaint) and one additional person who shall be independent of the management and running of the school.

- The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will contact the parent(s) and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, the Convenor will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.
- 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 five working 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.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 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 prepare a report (as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one) and may make recommendations.
- The Panel can either uphold the complaint in whole or in part or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Clerk and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Clerk and the Head.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Whilst we endeavour to resolve any complaint in the timescales indicated above, there may be cases, perhaps for reasons of holiday or illness, when a deviation from the normal timescale is necessary. In these circumstances the School commits to explain the reasons for any such delay.
- 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 30 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 25 working days.

A written record of all complaints, stating whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld), will be kept by the School.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record, in accordance with its Privacy Notice but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the

School, of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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)
- Notes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Under EYFS regulations concerning The Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements (Section 3, 3.74-3.75) Sibford School undertakes the following additional responsibilities:

Informal complaints should be made to the Head of Early Years and / or the Head of Junior School. These will be handled in accordance with Stage 1 (above).

Any written complaint (which should be made to the Head) about the fulfilment of the EYFS regulations will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days. The record of any such complaint will be made available to ISI on request.

Parents who wish to make a complaint if they believe Sibford School is not meeting the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements can contact ISI as follows:

Sibford will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.

Parents may complain directly to ISI and/or Ofsted if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact ISI and/or Ofsted:

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Record of Complaints

There were zero (0) complaints registered in the academic year 2023 – 2024, that went to a Stage 3 – panel hearing.

Who can I contact if I have a Complaint?

First read through our complaints policy and follow through the suggested steps. If you still wish to contact someone outside the school the following are the appropriate contacts:

Independent Schools Inspectorate OR Department for Education (DfE)

ISI
First Floor,
CAP House,
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100
Email: concerns@isi.net

Website: www.isi.net

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
MANCHESTER
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0370 000 2288
www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools

Website: www.education.gov.uk

If concerns relate to bullying or possible child abuse, parents should contact the Sibford School Designated Safeguarding Lead on 01295 781200 or email ptattersall-king@sibfordschool.co.uk

If the complaint is concerning the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the parent should contact the Head, on 01295 781200 or email revans@sibfordschool.co.uk

If this complaint concerns a possible Safeguarding/Child Protection issue about the Head, the Clerk of School Committee will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and be guided by them.

Should you wish to speak to someone outside the school regarding bullying or possible child abuse, then, in addition to ISI and/or DfE, you can contact the child protection unit of Oxfordshire Social Services Department.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related policies

Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy

Health and Safety

Curriculum