



The Skinnners' School

Complaints Policy

Procedures for dealing with complaints

At The Skinnners' School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

This policy refers to 'parents/carers' but this should be regarded as referring equally to a member of the public who makes a complaint.

This policy is available on request to parents of students and prospective students as well as members of public.

1) INFORMAL STAGE

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned or the Headmaster. Alternatively parents/carers can write to the member of staff or the Headmaster outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint/issue that is put in writing should be written clearly outlining all the issues and what it is hoped the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 to 5 working days.

Parent/carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a student, ideally the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the student, for example, class teacher or house tutor.

The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents/carers can ask for a copy of these notes.

2) FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal stages:

Stage 1

If a parent/carer is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff can refer the matter to the Headmaster. This can be done in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Headmaster will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Headmaster will clarify what the issues are. What the parent/carer hopes to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. Again parents/carers should be given a copy of this.

If the issue is complex the Headmaster may need to speak to other staff and students to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Headmaster should inform the parent/carer that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

Stage 2

After meeting with the Headmaster if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of governors. This can either be in writing to the Chair at the school address, or alternatively the school can ask the Chair of Governors to contact the parent/carer direct. The Headmaster can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Headmaster is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of governors and miss out Stage 1. The Chair of governors may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

The Chair of governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of governors should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The Chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

STAGE 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or Chair of governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a Complaints committee to consider the complaint. The Chair of governors will decide if this is appropriate.

If the Chair of governors can resolve the complaint there is no need to hold a Complaints Committee meeting. As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints committees are a last resort.

The Chair of governors can appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial, so if the investigating officer is another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated Complaints committee.

The Complaints committee is made up of three members of the Skinners' School's governing body. Sometimes governors need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies because the Skinners' School's governors are 'tainted' because they have prior knowledge of the complaint.

The Complaints committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Headmaster, the Chair of governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Headmaster, Chair of governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others

present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the Clerk to governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within five Skinners' School days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

If after this Skinners' School based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a student of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Headmaster, preferably in writing.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the Skinners' School in a central log which will indicate at which stage the complaint was resolved. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential. Parents and members of the public may request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident/situation. If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old the Skinners' School will write to the complainant explaining this is the case.

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