

COMPLAINTS POLICY



Date of Policy: March 2020

Review Date*: March 2021

Coordinator (s): Ms Bingley

Governor: Mr C Walpole

*** Policy Review: Annually or otherwise dictated by the Full Governing Body or by changes in legislation.**

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (PARENTS)

If parents have cause for concern or complaint about an aspect of their child's education (academic or pastoral) at Tower College, they should raise the matter with the School as soon as possible. The sooner we hear of a problem or potential problem, the sooner and more easily it can be investigated and satisfactorily resolved. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, promptly and confidentially. The School is here for the children and neither parents nor pupils will be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. This procedure is available both to the complainants and the person complained about.

Parents should feel free to talk directly to a department head to phone or to write with details of the issue that concerns them and who hopefully will be able to resolve the problem quickly. There may, however, be some concerns which parents may prefer to bring directly to the Principal or Vice-Principal.

Mrs A O'Grady	Principal
Mrs P Knox	Vice-Principal
Miss R Deane	Head of Pre-Prep
Mr C Wells	Head of Lower School
Mr C Dolan	Head of Middle School
Mr I Wells	Head of Upper School
Mrs K McCormack	Chair of Governors

STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- a) We hope that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Any complaint will receive an acknowledgement within **24 hours** during term time. During school holidays, a complaint will receive an acknowledgement within **3 working days**. Acknowledgement will consist of either immediate discussion (and it is hoped, resolution) in person or by telephone or, if wider consultation and/or investigation is required, by letter, setting out the conclusion of the inquiry and any action taken or proposed. If such action includes use of the disciplinary procedures for staff, this will be handled confidentially within the School.
- b) If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact the relevant Head of Department. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means and to the parents' satisfaction. If the relevant teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Principal or the Vice-Principal.
- c) Complaints made directly to the Principal or Vice-Principal will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the Principal or Vice-Principal deems it appropriate for him / her to deal with the matter personally. Confidentiality will be observed as far as is consistent with proper investigation and effective handling of a complaint. It is School policy that a complaint by a parent should not in any way adversely affect their son or daughter.
- d) In term time, the relevant teacher 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 **7 working days**, or in the event that the teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised in writing that they may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure (a formal complaint), within **7 working days** after the date of such advice.

STAGE 2 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents may put their complaint in writing to the Principal explaining their dissatisfaction. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, within **3 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter and, if at all possible, resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations and the Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for her decision. This will take place within **28 working days** following the delivery of the written complaint to the Principal under Stage 2.

If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors 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 Chair of Governors 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 and the Chair of Governors will give reasons for the decision. This will take place within **28 working days**.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision at Stage 2, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, within **7 working days** after the date of the decision.

STAGE 3 - PANEL HEARING

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the person who has been appointed by the Governors to call Hearings of the Appeals Committee.

The matter will then be referred to the Appeals Committee for consideration at a Hearing. The Committee 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 Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Governors will appoint each of the Committee members. The Chair of the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable but within **21 working days**.

If the Committee 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 **7 days** prior to the Hearing.

The parents may attend the Hearing and one other person may accompany the parents to the Hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate either for the School or the complainant.

If possible, the Committee will resolve the parental 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 of the facts they consider relevant, the Committee will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within **7 working days** of the Hearing. The Committee will write to the parents informing them of its decision, resulting actions and the reasons for it. The decision of the Committee will be final. The Committee's findings and any recommendations will be sent by email or otherwise given to the complainants and, where relevant, the person complained of. They will be made available for Inspection on the school premises by the Principal and the Chair of Governors on request.

Where a parent is unable or chooses not to attend the Appeals Committee after it has been convened, the School is under no obligation to convene another Hearing.

Once convened, the Appeals Committee will take place whether or not the parent attends. If the parent expresses satisfaction and a desire not to proceed further after the convening of the Hearing, the Hearing will close the complaint. If the parents remain dissatisfied, then the Hearing will consider the complainant in the parents' absence and issue findings on the matter that will bring it to a conclusion.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records kept will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails. A written record is kept of all formal complaints, their outcomes, when they were finalised and whether they were resolved at the preliminary Stage 2 or proceeded to a Panel Hearing. Action taken by the School as a result of a formal complaint will be recorded. All time limits referred to in the Complaints Procedure refer to term time. Any school holiday period will not be taken into account. References to 'working day' mean all days during term time other than Bank Holidays, Saturdays and Sundays.

It is a requirement of the Independent Schools' Regulations that schools publish the number of complaints in the previous academic year that required a Panel Hearing.

During the 2017-18 academic year the number of parental complaints at Tower College requiring a Panel Hearing = 0

TOWER COLLEGE'S REVIEW PROCEDURE FOR EXPULSIONS

These guidelines are non-contractual in nature. They have been prepared for the information and guidance of all who may become concerned in a review hearing following expulsion or the removal of the pupil at the request of the School.

Applying for a Review

Parents/guardians must apply for a review of a decision to expel or require removal, using the Request for Review Form (below). This form must be emailed to cwalpole@towercollege.com or posted to:

The Chair of the Appeal Committee (Mrs C Walpole) C/o Tower College, Mill Lane, Rainhill, Merseyside L35 6NE

within **7 days** of receipt of the written notification of the decision in question, which shall contain reasons for that decision.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances the review will take place within **15 days** of the expulsion or removal, and may be sooner if convenient to all parties.

Each member of the Review Committee for Expulsions will be supplied with a copy of all appropriate documents including a conduct file of the pupil. The parents shall be entitled to copies of all those documents in advance of the meeting except for those which, in the opinion of the Principal, should not be disclosed.

The Review Committee

This will normally consist of a three member sub-committee of the Governing Body, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. The Committee members will have no previous detailed knowledge of the case or of the pupil, parents or guardian, and will not include the Chair of Governors.

The Review Hearing

This will take place at the School premises. Those present at the review hearing will usually be:

Members of the Review Committee, The Principal and his nominees, Parents or those with parental responsibility and a Clerk to the meeting

The pupil may, where appropriate, be invited to attend the hearing. The parents and pupil may be accompanied by a friend or relation and by a member of the School staff if desired. That person will attend as a friend not as a representative.

The proceedings will be chaired by one member of the Review Committee and will be conducted in an informal manner, and all statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. The meeting will not be sound recorded but the Clerk will be asked to keep minutes of the proceedings. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes. The hearing will be directed at all times by the Chair of the Committee who will conduct the hearing in such a manner as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments.

All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may in his/her discretion adjourn or terminate the hearing. If the hearing is terminated the original decision will stand.

The Committee will consider each of the queries raised by the parents and pupil so far as these are relevant to:

- whether the facts of the cases, so far as they related to the pupil, were sufficiently proved when the decision was taken as to expel or require removal of the pupil. The standard of proof will be the balance of probability; and
- whether the sanction was warranted, i.e. proportionate to the breach of discipline or other events that are found to have occurred.

The requirements of natural justice will apply.

If the Principal considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or of the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chair of the Committee may require that the name of that person and the reasons for withholding it be written down and shown to the Review Committee. The Chair in his/her discretion may direct that the person be identified.

A member of the School staff may speak generally about the pupil's character, conduct and achievements at the school if s/he is willing to do so.

When the Committee Chair decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if by then there is no consensus s/he may adjourn the hearing.

The decision of the Review Committee will be final. It will be notified to the parents by the Chair of the Review Committee or the Chair of Governors by letter or telephone within **3 days** of the hearing.

REQUEST FOR REVIEW

Name of Pupil:

Names of those with Parental Responsibility:

Address of Parents/Guardian:

Telephone numbers: (day) (evening)

I, being a person with parental responsibility for the above named pupil, request that a committee of the Governing Body carries out a review of the decision [to require removal of or to expel the pupil]

We have received with this form a copy of the *Tower College's Review Procedure for Expulsions* and we agree to abide by its terms.

We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

The grounds upon which we seek a review and the matters which we wish to discuss at the review and to ask the Committee to take into account are as set out on the reverse side of, or attached to, this sheet.

We understand that we may be accompanied at the review by a friend or relation or by a member of the School staff who knows and who is willing to speak on behalf of the pupil.

(Two signatures required where practicable)

First Signature: Second Signature:

Full Name: Full Name:

Relationship to Pupil: Relationship to Pupil:

Date: Date: