HILL HOUSE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

It is the School's policy to ensure that parents with a grievance relating to their child's education can use a procedure that can help to resolve problems as quickly and fairly as possible. This procedure applies to all areas of the school, including Early Years Foundation Stage.

Occasionally parents of pupils currently at the School may wish to make a complaint, and this will be dealt with by the School in accordance with the following Complaints Procedure. These procedures do not apply to parents of prospective pupils.

2. Scope and application

References to parents of pupils should be taken to include any person who is not a parent but who has parental or care responsibility, of which the school is aware, for a pupil.

- This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions or inactions on the part of the School where a complainant seeks redress by the School.

- Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within 48 hours after the incident in question has occurred or at the very latest within one week (or where a series of associated incidents have occurred then within one week of the last of these incidents). If this is not possible, the complainant should explain the reason for this; accepted circumstances may include, for example, information relating to the incident only coming to light several weeks later; or the complainant having been unable for acceptable reasons to make the complaint any earlier.

- After investigation, the School will seek to agree with a complainant that the complaint has been promptly resolved, or acknowledge that it is wholly or partially upheld.

- In the latter event the School may additionally offer an explanation; an admission or apology that the subject issue could have been handled

differently or better; or future changes to its policies or procedures will be made which are appropriate to the specifics of the upheld complaint.

- Unless determined otherwise by the Head with the agreement of the Chair of Governors this policy will apply only to complaints raised at the time the complainant had a current, not past, pupil at the School.

- The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

- Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages, removal of the expectation of payment of fees in lieu of notice or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the School's complaints procedure.

- There may be occasions when the School deems it necessary to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified and if so complainants will be notified.

All complainants should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, the School will be materially restricted in what information it can and cannot share with a complainant about any individual(s) who may be the subject of a complaint. This inter alia may apply to any consequent communications, next steps or sanctions which may follow from the complaint. These restrictions derive from regulations with which all schools are required to comply, including those relating to data protection, confidentiality and the safeguarding of children.

3. Complaints Stages

Stage 1 (Informal)

If a parent has a complaint they should discuss it initially with the relevant Teacher, Tutor, Head of Department, Head of Key Stage, Housemaster/Mistress or Senior Manager. We hope that the majority of concerns will be resolved in this way. Such concerns will normally be dealt with within one week.

Stage 2 (Formal)

If the problem remains unresolved, parents will be invited to complete the Stage 2 Complaint Proforma, which should be submitted to the Headmaster. This should be lodged as soon as is reasonable, and must be within 5 working/school days. Parents must adhere to the stated word limit.

The Stage 2 complaint should include:

- contact details for the complainant;
- details of the complaint, including with whom it has been raised at Stage 1 and reasons for being dissatisfied with the process or outcome of Stage 1;
- what actions or outcomes the complainant believes could resolve the complaint now;
- a schedule of any relevant documents.

The Headmaster will then respond within 10 school/working days having made whatever enquiries are possible or necessary. Complaints concerning EYFS will be dealt with within 28 days. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Governors in writing via the School Office.

The school does not record, permit recording or allow AI note taking of complaints meetings. The school does not take verbatim notes of such meetings but will summarise proceedings in its subsequent letter concerning its findings.

Stage 3 (Panel)

If, having completed the above stages, the problem remains unresolved, parents may approach the Governors in writing via the School Office.

It is not possible to move to this stage without having written to and/or met with the Headmaster as laid down in Stage 2.

Such appeals should be lodged as soon as is reasonable, and must be within 10 working/school days, following the Headmaster's response at Stage 2.

The Chair (or Deputy) will then convene a Complaints' Hearing. This will take place normally within the next 10 working/school days, and constitute a panel of 3 persons, at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. None of the panel will be involved in the issues specific to the complaint. The appeal hearing may take place in person or online at the discretion of the persons hearing the appeal. Parents may attend the hearing, and be accompanied if they so wish; this does not include legal representation.

The school does not record, permit recording or allow AI note taking of complaints meetings. The school does not take verbatim notes of such meetings but will summarise proceedings in its subsequent letter concerning its findings.

The Complaints' Panel will make findings and recommendations, which will be given in writing to the parents, Headmaster, and, if applicable, the member of staff about whom the complaint has been made. This will normally be done within 10 days of the Hearing. The Governors' decision is final.

4. Use of Artificial Intelligence

Complaints written with significant use of Artificial Intelligence are often confusing and poorly composed, and thus difficult to which to respond. The school reserves the right to return any such complaint to the parent concerned and ask for it to be written without the use of Artificial Intelligence.

5. Unreasonable complaints and 'complaint campaigns'

The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality response to those who complain.

However, unreasonable complaints are not deemed acceptable as they distract from the normal operation of the School; represent a poor allocation of valuable School resources; and potentially hinder the progress of proper investigations into a complaint.

Though a complaint may be reasonable the behaviour of the complainant may not be. The School adopts the Department for Education's definition of unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders its consideration of a complaint because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School. The School does not expect its staff, Head or Governors to have to tolerate unreasonable behaviour from a complainant and will take action to protect them from that behaviour, including that which is misrepresentative of the facts, threatening or defamatory. The school may make reference to the parent contract and courtesy policy as part of this process.

A 'complaint campaign' is when a complaint from three or more separate complainants all relate to what the school regards as the same or substantially the

same subject. In this circumstance the School may depart from the procedure set out in this policy, including reverting with a common response to all complainants.

6. Persistent Correspondence

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

7. Data Protection Requests

The timescales in this policy may be varied if a complainant has requested a data subject access request alongside complaint. Such variance will not be beyond the timescales required for a SAR.

8. Record Keeping

A record of complaints is kept for at least 7 years, including details of at which stage a complaint was resolved. Records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

All meetings will be documented. A written record of all Complaints' Panel Hearings and Recommendations will be kept by the Headmaster and be available at school to the complainant.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them. The record of complaints in EYFS will be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

9. School Fee Plan

If a parent wishes to make a complaint relating to the School's credit broking activities or the sale of School Fee Plan, they should send details to the School Bursar. The School will then notify the Premium Credit Limited (PCL) Compliance Team. All investigations, enquiries and communications with the complainant will be conducted by PCL, therefore the School will not attempt to discuss or resolve complaints directly with the complainant. PCL will send a Summary Resolution letter for complaints resolved by the close of three business days. If a complaint cannot be

resolved in three business days PCL have eight weeks to investigate and resolve a complaint to be in line with Dispute Resolution rules (found in the Financial Conduct Authority handbook).

10. Other Bodies

Parent can also contact OFSTED (Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (CAP House, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, Telephone 020 7600 0100) to make a complaint.

5/10/26