



TOWN CLOSE SCHOOL

NORWICH'S FINEST PREP SCHOOL • FOR GIRLS & BOYS • 3-13 YEARS

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE v1.9

A complaint is considered to be any matter or concern about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action from the School.

The School would much rather hear of any concern early. Concerns may be communicated to form/class teachers, tutors, Heads of Department, or members of the Senior Management Team, as appropriate. It may be best to start with the person most closely involved with the issue and to raise matters with the class teacher (Year 4 and below)/Tutor (Year 5 and above). When they are matters to do with sports or music, for instance, it might be best to raise the concerns with the Head of Department. These members of staff may be able to resolve the matter quickly, without recourse to any further process. However, they may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Head of the Pre Prep or the Prep Department Deputy Head. This may be more appropriate when the concerns relate to bullying, pastoral matters or are to do with the care and supervision of children. Even in cases where staff are able to resolve the issue, they will notify the Headmaster of any serious concerns or complaints received. Town Close welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously any concerns they may raise.

A record is kept by the School of all formal complaints, along with the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld), including whether they were resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing. This is kept for at least three years. Any 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 Education and Skills Act requests them. Separate records are also kept of concerns which reach the Head (either directly or by his being notified by another member of staff) which generally require action on the School's behalf even though the concern may not have been expressed as a formal complaint. There were two formal complaints made in the academic year 2019/20. One was not resolved to the parents' satisfaction until Stage 3 of the process. The second was resolved to the parents' satisfaction at Stage 1 of the process. There were no formal complaints received during the 2020/21 academic year. There were no formal complaints received in the year 2021/22.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way.
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously.

- We take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible and at least within five working days, if received during term, and as soon as practicable if received during holiday periods.

If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the following procedures:

STAGE 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally in the ways described above before parents feel it necessary to make a formal complaint.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Deputy Head, Head of Pre Prep or the Head, will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher/tutor, unless the Head of Department, Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The class teacher/tutor will make a written record of all concerns potentially serious enough that the Head will need to be notified and all complaints including the date on which they were received. Should a complaint not be resolved within 5 working days, or in the event that the appropriate member of staff 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.

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**. Such letters should be sent to the School:

**Town Close School,
14 Ipswich Road,
Norwich,
Norfolk,
NR2 2LR**

Alternatively, they can be sent via email: head@townclose.com

- The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak directly to the parents concerned, normally within 5 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 or ask another senior member of staff to investigate.
- 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 his/her decision. The complainant will be notified of the decision as soon as possible, within a maximum of 28 days.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- Any written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman or Deputy Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will, in most cases, meet with parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman or Deputy Chairman is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The complainant will be notified of the decision as soon as possible, within a maximum of 28 days.

If parents are still not satisfied, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

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 Chair of Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. If the Chairman of Governors has already been involved in considering a complaint against the Head, it will be referred to the Deputy Chairman of Governors.
- 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chair of Governors (or Deputy Chairman of Governors where appropriate), on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days.
- 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 2 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.
- 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 within 5 working 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 recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. The findings will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and Head.
- Where a dispute is still unresolved, the School will provide parents with the name and address of a certified alternative dispute resolution ('ADR') entity, in accordance with The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 ('the ADR Regulations'). Such ADR practitioners would be competent to deal with any unresolved dispute, should both parties wish to engage in ADR.

Habitual or Vexatious Complainants

In the unlikely event of habitual or vexatious complaints, the School will deal with this in accordance with the parental contract Paragraph 6 (b).

General

Nothing in this policy affects an individual's statutory rights.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Parents may wish to take their complaint to OFSTED or The Independent Schools Inspectorate. In which case they are advised to contact these organisations at the following locations:

Independent Schools Inspectorate

**CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel 020 7600 0100**

**OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester
M1 2DW
0300 123 1231**

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