Date: May 2024
Review Date: August 2026
Responsibility: Headmaster

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

Epsom College in Malaysia ("ECiM") prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with the procedure described below. This document is available on request (and via the College website) to parents and guardians of current pupils, and parents of prospective pupils.

If a decision has been made to suspend a pupil for more than eleven days, a pupil is expelled or required to leave the school permanently then the Exclusions, Removal and Review Policy should be followed.

In this procedure **"Parent/s"** includes a current parent or legal guardian or education guardian and includes a parent whose child has recently left the College if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the College.

What constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively and in a timely manner.

The College shall aim to resolve informal complaints made under Stage 1 (please see below on details of stages 1 to 3) within six school working days.

Formal complaints made under Stage 2 will be acknowledged within six school working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The College shall aim to resolve formal complaints within 22 school working days of receipt of the complaint or as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

The College will aim to conclude Stage 3, the Complaints Panel Hearing, within 28 school working days of receipt of the request for a Hearing, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

At any stage, where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

When we refer to **"school working days",** we mean Monday to Friday, when the College is open during term time and the administration staff are at work. The dates of terms are published on the College's website.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the College as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Records may contain the following information:

- 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)
- Any recommendations made by the Panel and any subsequent actions taken by the College
- Separate records will be made of any complaints relating to boarding, along with any recommendations made by the Panel and subsequent actions taken by the College.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required during the course of an inspection, or under other legal authority.

Stage 1 — Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Housemaster/mistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster/mistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Head Pastoral.

- Complaints made directly to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster/mistress unless the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.

- The Housemaster/mistress 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 twelve working days, or in the event that the Housemaster/mistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure. If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

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 Headmaster, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, normally within six working days, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.

- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Headmaster 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 within twenty-two working days of the Headmaster receiving the complaint. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his/her decision.

- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman will give reasons for their decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, 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 a Governor, who has been appointed by the Board of Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. A parent may request a review by the Governors of the Headmaster's decision to suspend a pupil for more than eleven days, to expel them or to require their removal from the school. Such a review would be carried out by a Governors' Review Panel as detailed in Exclusions, Removal and Review Policy.

- The request for a Complaints Panel Hearing must be made by the parents within six school working days of the conclusion of Stage 2 above.

- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors, and the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, but within twenty-two 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 two days prior to the hearing.

- The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation would not normally be appropriate.

- A contemporaneous minute of the Hearing will be taken and those present may make their own handwritten notes. No recording of the Hearing by any electronic or digital means shall be permitted.

- 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 six school 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, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be kept in the College and be available for inspection at any time by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

A written record will be kept of all complaints including outcomes and the stage at which each one was resolved. The record will be reviewed annually by the Headmaster.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that parents or pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where any other legal obligation prevails.