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**HAILEYBURY ALMATY**

**COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURES**

The following comments are offered to staff by way of advice when dealing with a complaint. There is no ideal way in which to handle such situations, since all parents are individuals, as are all children. Effective complaint handling, however, can play a key role in improving our relations with the parent body.

There has been some evidence that parents have been dissatisfied with the way that complaints have been handled; there is a danger that complaints might be handled by the wrong person. What follows is directed towards improving our methods of dealing with complaints, whether formal or informal.

**Underlying principles**

* Every complaint is a marketing opportunity. A complaint that is well handled and that produces an outcome that is satisfactory to all parties will enhance the school’s reputation.
* No school is perfect and so we should have the confidence to investigate complaints fairly in an open and self-critical way.
* Staff should take care not to criticise colleagues to parents until any investigation is complete. Even at this stage, the language used should be measured and professional.
* The speed of a response is critical to achieving a satisfactory outcome from the complainant’s point of view; things should not be allowed to drag on.
* It is better to bring parties together face-to-face and avoid lengthy, time-consuming correspondence wherever possible. However, a written allegation requires a written response.
* Complaints should be dealt with by the teacher responsible for the criticised activity.
* In all correspondence; pejorative language should be avoided. Calmness and fairness should be the keys.
* Individual complaints should be placed in a broader context. Is there a widely shared concern?

**The Practicalities**

* All complaints should receive a response of some kind within 24 hours, even if this is only a holding reply such as “I’ll look into it”.
* We should aim to complete a full reply to a complaint within a week.
* Complaints about teaching should be dealt with by the Head of Department / School.
* Complaints about school academic policy should be dealt with by the Deputy Head.
* Complaints about sports provision should be dealt with by the Head of PE.
* Complaints about tutoring should be dealt with by the Head of School and arrangements in Houses should be dealt with by House Masters / Mistress.
* Where a meeting is arranged, junior colleagues should be accompanied by their Head of Department / School.
* All letters sent to parents must be approved by the Head of Department / School and Headmaster and filed by the member of staff who despatched them.

**Letters to parents**

* Should be on individualised headed notepaper: Headmaster’s PA can help generate this if you require assistance.
* They should be in the school’s standard font – Ariel 12 point.
* Should be measured in tone, and should never criticise a parent for raising an issue, even where the complaint has proved unfounded. We should not adopt a defensive stance when faced with a complaint.
* Should be shown to the Line Manager before despatch to reduce the possibility of errors or inappropriate tone.
* If a colleague is acknowledged to be at fault, then that colleague should also be shown the letter, or should be aware of what has been communicated to parents orally.

By DH, Written 2009, Whole School, Reviewed 2013