

The Hammond - Complaints Policy & Procedure Whole School

October 2012, October 13, January 2014, August 2014, August 2015, September 2015,
September 2016, February 2017, September 2017, March 2018, **October 2018**

Every Child Matters:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing.

Helping Every Child to Achieve More

Introduction

The Hammond sets out to ensure that:

- The Hammond listens and acts on all complaints.
- All complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and promptly.
- Wherever possible, The Hammond will find a resolution.
- Complainants will not suffer as a result of a complaint.

This procedure is not intended to replace the normal discussions regarding problems and concerns which take place in school on a day-to-day basis. It is only where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions that further steps may need to be taken. This procedure applies to all staff.

The policy also applies to former pupils/students and their parents only if the complaint was raised whilst their child was still registered at the school. It does not apply to the parents of prospective students (please see General Complaints). For members of the general public wishing to make a complaint about the school please see General Complaints.

This policy is available to all parents of day and boarding pupils on The Hammond website, www.thehammondschool.co.uk, or on request from the Registrar, Mrs Jan Foden.

Aims

- To give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly.
- The school will allow sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed
- To find a resolution through open dialogue and mutual understanding.
- To make every effort to ensure parents of boarders who wish to complain are given an appointment at a time convenient to them.

What the school expects

The Hammond expects its staff to treat parents of Hammond students in a courteous and polite manner. Equally the school expects that parents will treat its staff in the same way.

General Complaints

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision or facilities or services which the school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (i.e. Exclusions, Admissions). These complaints should be made in writing to the Business Manager at the school's postal address.

The Hammond
Mannings Lane
Chester, CH2 4ES

Complaints about services supplied by other providers who may use the school's premises should be made directly to the companies concerned, who should have their own complaints procedures.

Any such complaints, from September 2016, will be recorded separately from parental complaints, but will be dealt with in the spirit of this policy.

Anonymous

The school will do its best to be helpful to parents who contact them with a complaint. However, the school will not, and of course by their nature is unable to, respond to an anonymous complaint.

Monitoring and Review

The Board of Directors of The Hammond monitors the Complaints Procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal will check the complaints file regularly for logs of complaints received by The Hammond, identify any trends over time and note how efficiently complaints are resolved. Directors will examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure. Discussion of the complaints policy will be included annually in a staff training meeting, usually at the start of the academic year in September on the whole staff INSET programme.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Most complaints can be dealt with informally. If the parent has a child at The Hammond, and the parent's concern is about The Hammond, the education provided by The Hammond, or matters in the boarding house, these should first be discussed with the child's form tutor, or with the pastoral leader responsible for the appropriate Key Stage (Mrs Anna Thomas (KS3), Miss Jennifer Roscoe (KS4) and Mrs Claire Wheeler (Post-16)) or with boarding house staff. In most cases, concerns can be dealt with by staff before they reach the stage of a formal complaint. Where a complaint is made, staff in both school and boarding houses will record the steps taken to resolve the issue informally and keep notes of discussions. However, it is recognised that neither teachers nor boarding house staff wish to discourage parents from voicing concerns by formally logging every minor concern raised.

Please note that timescale could differ during school holiday periods, particularly during the summer holiday period. However, where possible the school will endeavour to adhere to the timescales listed. Records of such complaints will be kept on the pupil's file.

For Exclusions Appeals, parents should follow the process as set out within this policy. See also Exclusions Policy. Staff complaints: staff should refer to their Employee Handbook and the Grievance Procedure contained within it.

The Hammond is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. The Hammond will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Stage 1 – Informal

If the parent has a concern then they should make an appointment to see either the class teacher, form tutor, assistant principal, vice-principal, principal, or house staff to arrange an informal discussion. If parents live at a distance then concerns could

be put in a letter. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form tutor, teacher, or house staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with one of the Vice-Principals/Principal, all of whom consider any complaint very seriously. The class teacher, form tutor, head of year or house staff, will then discuss the matter again with the parent within seven working days. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved at this stage. The form tutor/ teacher, member of the boarding house staff will make a brief, written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If the original concern was expressed in a letter, then the response may also be by letter. Should the matter not be resolved at this stage or in the event that the tutor 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

If the matter cannot be resolved informally the parent should then make an appointment to see the Principal and put their complaint in writing before the meeting. If the complaint is about the Principal then parents should write directly to the Directors to make a formal complaint. When writing the nature of the complaint should be stated and the steps already taken to resolve it. Parents should state their views on discussions with The Hammond so far, and the action they would like to see taken to remedy their concerns. Parents will be notified of the outcome of any investigations or enquiries within 14 working days of receipt of the complaint. Should the complaint be received immediately before or during a holiday period the time taken to investigate the issue and inform parents of findings will be 28 working days. The school will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and will at all times endeavour to ensure that issues are dealt with properly and fairly. Where a parent is not satisfied with the response to a formal complaint made in writing, provision will be made for a meeting before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Directors. In other words, a parent should proceed to stage three of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Formal, Panel Meeting

At this stage, a panel will meet to consider the complaint, meet parents and make a final decision about the complaint on behalf of the Directors. 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 Hammond, who has no connection, past or present, with the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Directors.

Parents will be requested to submit written evidence on the complaint. The Directors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, and within 14 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. 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 but if required, the identity of the person(s) attending should be made known to the panel beforehand.

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 a further seven 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 Principal and the Directors and where appropriate, the person complained about.

For compliance purposes a panel hearing should take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. The panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, at what stage they were resolved and the actions taken by the school. This will include situations where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the informal complaint made. The Hammond will ensure that a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing is then provided. These records will be kept for at least three years and will be made available for inspection on The Hammond's premises by the Proprietor (Chair of the Board of Directors) and the Principal.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State for Education or a body conducting an inspection of The Hammond under sections 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Unreasonable, Serial and Persistent Complainants

In cases where the school is contacted by an individual repeatedly making the same points, or who asks the school to reconsider its position, the school will act appropriately.

In line with the introduction and aims set out in this policy, the school hopes it can resolve a complaint. However, if despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied regarding an issue which has already been investigated and which has followed this procedure, it would be a poor use of the schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of the Board of Directors can inform the complainant that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant continues to contact the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond.

The Hammond defines unreasonable complainants as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

The school follows guidance as laid down in the Department for Education Document Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures January 2016. Further details can be sought in this document.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The Hammond will therefore act to ensure that it remains a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of its community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Principal or the Chair of Directors can notify a parent in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. The school will always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed, the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will remain in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Principal or Chair of Directors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once The Hammond's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

The above is in line with the Department for Education Document 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures' - January 2016.

The Hammond will provide Ofsted or the ISI, on request, with a written record of all formal complaints made during any specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Complaints

The number of formal complaints recorded against The Hammond for 2017 – 2018 are listed below.

<p>There were 7 formal complaints recorded against The Hammond during the previous school year – September 2017 to August 2018. All were resolved at stage two.</p>

Contact Information

Parents can make a complaint to ISI/OFSTED if they so wish. The school and this policy pay regard to Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

Local Authority Designated Officer	Mr Paul Jenkins The Children's Safeguarding Unit 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port Cheshire Tel: 0151 356 6692
OFSTED for Post-16 Trinity Diploma Students	Ofsted Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Helpline: 0300 123 1231
Children's Commissioner England	Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT Tel: 020 7783 8330 Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Independent Schools' Inspectorate ISI	Independent Schools Inspectorate CAP House 9/12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA Tel: 020 7600 0100 Email: info@isi.net www.isi.net
Department for Education	Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD www.gov.uk Telephone 0370 000 2288 The national helpline is open between Monday and Friday, 9am to 5pm, although you may get a quicker answer by calling between 9am and 10am, or between 4pm and 5pm.