

MPW Cambridge Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The college has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students, and complaints are rare. No formal complaints were received during the academic year 2008/2009. However, if the parents of a student do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the college in accordance with the four-stage procedure set out below.

The aim of the procedure is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. The college will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter that may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing the college's systems and procedures in the light of circumstances.

The term 'parents' includes parents, legal guardians, educational guardians and students aged 16 or over (current or prospective). The procedure set out below may, at our discretion, also be used to deal with a complaint pertaining to a student who has recently left the college.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Personal Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Personal Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Principal.
- A complaint made directly to the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant Personal Tutor unless the Principal deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The Personal Tutor will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days or in the event that the Personal Tutor and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the 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 Principal. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, either orally or in writing and normally within five working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely timescale. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Principal will meet with or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigation and to request further information from any party.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his decision.

MPW Cambridge Complaints Procedure

Stage 3 – Reference to the Managing Director of MPW Ltd

- If the parents are dissatisfied with the Principal's decision under Stage 2, or if the complaint is against the Principal, the complaint should be referred in writing to the Managing Director of MPW Ltd. If the Principal is in receipt of the original complaint, he will refer it to the Managing Director in such cases.
- The Managing Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing and normally within seven working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely timescale.
- The Managing Director will arrange for the complaint to be considered following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2. When he is satisfied that he has established all the material facts, so far as is practicable, he will notify the parents in writing of his decision and the reasons for it.

Stage 4 – Complaints Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 4 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must write to the Managing Director requesting a hearing before the Complaints Panel. The request will only be considered if Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the procedure have been completed. Parents must state in their letter the outcome desired and all the grounds of the complaint. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the college's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see.
- The Managing Director will acknowledge the request, in writing and normally within five working days of receiving it, and then schedule a hearing before the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days thereafter.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons, comprising members of the Board of Directors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint and at least one member who is independent of the management and governance of the college.
- The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by the Panel) and will be conducted in an informal manner.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than five 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.
- All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they so wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Chairman may direct that the hearing is tape recorded to assist accurate recollection for purposes of the decision. The Panel will be under no obligation to retain tapes thereafter. A handwritten minute of the hearing will be taken in any event.
- The Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
- All those attending the hearing will be expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the

MPW Cambridge Complaints Procedure

Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comments will be minuted.

- If further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Managing Director, the Principal and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will only be discharged to third parties in the event of the college being required to satisfy paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003, where disclosure is required in the course of a college inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.