



33a Complaints Procedure



Author: Philip Miller

Last review: 5th November 2021

Next review: January 2022

Approved by: Mark English

Introduction

UCS prides itself on the quality of education we provide, our pastoral care and our openness of communication. Parents and carers are always encouraged to make contact with staff if they have a matter of concern regarding their son or daughter's education or happiness at school, and to seek action by the school.

Our aim is always to resolve such issues informally, and as quickly and personally as possible. It is intended that the procedure outlined below allows concerns/ complaints to be raised easily and without generating any further anxiety.

Complaints are treated seriously and impartially.

The Rights of Pupils

If a pupil wishes to raise a complaint personally he/she should speak directly with his/her Year/Deme Warden or, if he/she wishes, with the Headmaster. The matter will then be handled at Stage 1. If it is not satisfactorily resolved in this way, the pupil's parent(s) should follow the procedure for Stage 2 (formal resolution) outlined below.

Complaint 'stages' and escalation

There are three stages to the complaints procedure: Stage 1 or 'Informal Stage', Stage 2 or 'Formal Stage' and Stage 3, a 'Panel Hearing'.

All complaints will initially be considered at Stage 1 irrespective of whether they are made verbally, by telephone or in writing (including by email). A complaint will only progress to Stage 2 if the parent/ carer is not satisfied that it has been resolved at Stage 1, according to the timescales outlined below, and only then if the parent/ carer escalates the complaint by writing directly to the Headmaster.

If the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made to the Headmaster in Stage 2, they may pass their complaint on to the Council of UCS who will establish an appropriate Panel to consider the matter under the Stage 3 process outlined below.

The complainant will be kept informed of any escalation from stage 1 to stage 2, and from stage 2 to stage 3, as appropriate.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

Where a parent/ carer has a concern/ complaint, it should initially be raised with the member of staff best placed to provide an early and informal resolution. This is normally the Form Tutor or Year/ Deme Warden, but there are occasions when this could be another member of staff. The concern/ complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.

This member of staff who was contacted by the parent/ carer will then investigate as required and seek to resolve the matter. In the course of the investigation that member of staff may need to consult with, or refer the complaint to, a more senior colleague, such as a Head of Department, a Warden, Head of Section, Assistant Head or Deputy Head. Note that complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Management Team or Headmaster will normally be referred to the relevant Head of Department, Form Tutor or Year/Deme Warden in the first instance, unless the senior teacher thinks it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Note that any complaints handled in this way, whether by a member of SLT or not, remain classified as Stage 1 Complaints.

The member of staff who was first point of contact (or the colleague to whom the issue was subsequently referred) will respond to the parent/ carer within a further seven working days, with the aim of resolving the matter satisfactorily. As appropriate, we will seek to give reassurance and advice; explain our course of action; refer to relevant school policies and procedures; outline the context of any incident or decision; outline how we will review or amend or practice; apologise for mistakes or oversights.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

A complaint which has been escalated to Stage 2 will be considered by the Headmaster. He will then decide the appropriate course of action. The complaint should be acknowledged within two working days and normally resolved within seven working days thereafter.

It is likely that the Headmaster will wish to meet personally with the parent in order to discuss the matter. It may be that the matter can be resolved at this meeting, or the Headmaster may think it necessary to carry out further investigations. He will always keep the parent fully informed (by letter, telephone, or in person) of the ways in which the issue is being handled. When the Headmaster has reached his decision, the parent will be informed in writing, with a full account of the Headmaster's reasoning.

The Headmaster may, if he chooses, refer the complaint to Council to aid the process of resolution. He will inform the parent if he thinks that this course of action will be helpful and appropriate. The Chairman of Council will then identify two members of Council who will receive copies of all relevant papers from the Headmaster and will meet privately with the parent to hear the complaint, and with other affected parties. The involvement of members of Council at this stage is not investigatory, but is rather to assist the Headmaster and the parent to reach agreement in the matter and to decide upon an effective process of resolution.

Parents wishing to make a complaint against the Headmaster should do so directly to the Chairman of the UCS Council (the Chairman of Governors). The Chairman of Council will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all relevant documentation. The Chairman of Council may also call for a briefing from other members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman of Council is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of his decision, including the reasons for that decision, in writing. If parents are not satisfied with the response to their complaint the complaint should proceed to a panel hearing.

Stage 3- Panel Hearing

If the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made to the Headmaster in Stage 2 and has passed their complaint on to the Council of UCS, Council will establish an appropriate Panel to consider the matter. The particular arrangements for this stage of the procedure will be communicated to parents at the time.

The Panel shall be appointed by the Council of UCS and shall normally comprise three persons not directly involved in the case hitherto. Two shall be members of the Council of UCS and one shall be independent of the management and governance of the school. The Panel Chair will be selected by the school. Hearings will normally be held within 28 days of the approach to Council. The parent will be invited to attend, and have a right

to be accompanied by one other person (this may be a relative, teacher or friend; legal representation will not normally be appropriate). Other relevant evidence may be heard.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the 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, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This process will normally be completed within seven days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and of the reasons for it. Any further recommendations will also be sent in writing to the parent, the Headmaster, the Council of UCS and, where relevant, the person complained of. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Records of Complaints and Confidentiality

Unless disclosure is legally required (as set out below), complaints are treated confidentially.

In the course of investigating a complaint at any stage, it may be necessary for the person who received the complaint to divulge the identity of the complainant (or the pupil in question) to one or more colleague(s), in order to ensure that the complaint is properly addressed. Colleagues party to the complaint will always be aware that the complaint remains confidential.

Written records of all complaints are kept for a minimum of seven years, unless they are subject to the provisions of the Safeguarding Policy, in which case they are kept for as long as they are thereby required.

Record of Complaint Form is completed whenever a complaint is received and investigated. These forms include the identity of the complainant (and pupil involved); the nature of the complaint; the date on which it was received; the outcome, including any action that has been taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld; and whether it was resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3.

The ROC Form is held centrally and is accessible to the Headmaster, the Vice-Master, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Director of Compliance. In addition to this central record, pupils' files will retain a record of complaints pertaining to them, and of any actions taken following the complaint; these pupil files are overseen by the Year or Deme Warden. They will therefore be aware of the complaint whether they had been party to it up to the point of resolution, or not.

Records of all complaints, together with associated correspondence, statements and records, are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

The record of all Stage 1 complaints will be reviewed termly by the Vice-Master. The Vice-Master feeds back to SLT, advising on any trends in complaints that are emerging. There may be discussion of complaints made and how they were resolved, but at these discussions the confidentiality of complaints and pupils involved is maintained.

The Headmaster shall brief the Chair of Council on trends in stage 1 complaints, as well as always disclosing stage 2 complaints. The Chair of Council, will then take a view on which other members of Council should know about any stage 2 complaints, this being with a view of allowing ready selection of governors to a stage 3 panel if required.

Number of Complaints Registered at Stage 2

The number of Stage 2 complaints in the last twelve months is available on request from the Headmaster's office.
