



## YORK STEINER SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### **Introduction**

York Steiner School aims to provide quality teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be taken seriously by the school and dealt with in accordance with the following procedure.

There is an underlying principle that concerns ought to be resolved, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. However, formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful and the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The HR Mandate Holder will be responsible for keeping records and will hold them centrally. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be held confidentially.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

We will endeavor to resolve concerns and complaints quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Class teacher. In most cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the complainant does not wish to raise the issue through the class teacher they should contact the HR Mandate Holder or the Administrator.

If the Class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, or feel they need the support of another colleague, they will consult the HR Mandate Holder or the administrator

If the complaint concerns a member of staff other than the Class teacher, the complainant should contact the HR Mandate Holder or Administrator, who in most cases would be able to resolve the situation informally, together with the teacher concerned.

In some instances it may be good practice to call an informal meeting between the complainant and the teacher concerned, The HR mandate holder will facilitate the meeting and act as an objective listening ear. The meeting would only take place after the HR Mandate Holder/administrator has consulted all parties independently and feels that a meeting is appropriate and constructive

Complaints made directly to the Chair of IMP will usually be referred to the HR Mandate Holder, unless the complaint is about the HR Mandate Holder or the parents / teacher concerned have valid reasons why the HR Mandate holder should not deal with this complaint, in which case either the Chair of IMP or the administrator will deal with stage 1 of this procedure. In such cases the IMP Chair / Administrator may agree to facilitate a meeting between all parties.

The HR Mandate Holder (or the IMP Chair / Administrator if he/she is dealing with the complaint), will make a written record of all concerns/complaints and the date on which they were received. This written record will be shown to all those involved who will be asked to confirm that it is an accurate record of what has taken place. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days, or in the event that the parties

concerned fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the complainant will be advised of the option to make a formal 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 complainant should put their complaint in writing to the IMP Chair/HR Mandate Holder. He/she will decide, after considering the complaint and consulting the HR Mandate Holder/IMP Chair, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the IMP Chair will have a meeting with the complainant concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The complainant will be encouraged to bring someone with them to support them.

It may be necessary for the IMP Chair to carry out further investigations.

The IMP Chair will keep written records of all meetings, interviews and correspondence in relation to the complaint. Such records will be kept strictly confidential.

Once the IMP Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed of this decision and any actions in writing. He/she will also give reasons for the decision reached.

If the complainants are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

## **Stage 3 – Mediation Group Hearing**

If the complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a Facilitator, who has been appointed by the Board of Trustees to call hearings of the Mediation Group.

The matter will then be referred to the Mediation Group for consideration. The Mediation Group will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Mediation Group members will be appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Facilitator, on behalf of the Mediation Group, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable - normally within 7 days of the request to move to stage 3.

If the Mediation Group 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 3 days prior to the hearing.

The complainant 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.

If possible, the Mediation Group will resolve the complainant's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Mediation Group will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Mediation Group will reach a decision (and may make recommendations), which it shall complete within 7 days of the hearing. The Mediation Group will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Mediation Group will be final. The Mediation Group's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the IMP Chair, the Chair of the Board of Trustees and, where relevant, the person at whom the complaint was directed. When necessary the Mediation Group will refer to the School's disciplinary procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

### **Basic Principles underlying each stage:**

#### Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

- Establish the facts and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and any unresolved issues
- Meet the complainant or contact them
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview

#### Resolving Complaints

At each stage the school will keep in mind ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid, either in total or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one of the following:

- An apology, either verbal or in writing
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

It is helpful if complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.