



**Cokethorpe**  

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**SCHOOL**

# Complaints Procedure Policy

September 2023

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Cokethorpe School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and pupils and takes seriously complaints and concerns that they may raise. This document will show you how to use our complaints system.

**A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response.**

We wish to make sure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- We act where appropriate

Cokethorpe School is committed to offering education, pastoral care and communication of the highest quality. We welcome comments from parents about the quality of services which we provide - good or bad.

If you are not happy with any aspect of the School or about your contact with us, we need to know so that we can take action to make improvements. The School receives very few complaints from parents, and we hope that the majority of problems can be resolved through informal, friendly discussions without the need to resort to formal procedures.

The staff take all complaints very seriously because we put the welfare of all our pupils and our service to parents at the top of our list of priorities. In the event of a complaint it is our aim to:

- Ensure a full and fair investigation
- Respect the desire for confidentiality, should it be requested
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response
- Deal with the matter as quickly as possible, either immediately or otherwise within two working days of receiving a communication. If it is going to take longer, we will explain to you what action is being taken and will keep you informed thereafter.

In accordance with Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations, the procedure for making a formal complaint is available from the Headmaster's Assistant as are details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### **'I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me'**

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

### **'I am not sure whether to complain or not'**

If, as parents, you have concerns, you are entitled to express them. If in doubt, you should contact the School, as we are here to help.

### **'How should I complain?' (Stage 1) Informal**

You can talk directly to any member of staff, write a letter, email or telephone. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. Any member of staff will be happy to help and will make a written record of the subject matter and the date on which it was received. This will be sent to the Headmaster for information. As part of the Early Years Provision, and in keeping with good practice, all complaints and associated documents are kept on file until at least the next ISI inspection.

It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, your child's class teacher, tutor or Housemaster or to raise concerns over games direct with the Director of Sport. They may be able to sort things out quickly and effectively. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Deputy Headmaster, the Director of Studies, the Head of Sixth Form, the Head of Prep School or the Headmaster. Should the matter not be resolved

satisfactorily at this informal stage, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 – Formal.

### **What will happen next?’ (Stage 2) Formal**

If concerns or complaints cannot be resolved informally then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will consider the matter and decide upon the appropriate course of action to take. The Headmaster will speak to or meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter, within seven working days of receiving the written complaint. He will attempt to resolve the matter at this stage although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headmaster is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established so far as is practicable a decision will be made and communicated to the parents in writing. If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster’s decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure – Panel Hearing.

### **‘I am still not happy’ (Stage 3) Panel Hearing**

If parents wish to invoke Stage 3 having failed to achieve earlier resolution either informally or formally, they should write to the Chairman of Governors (via the Headmaster’s Assistant) setting out the basis for their complaint. The Chairman of Governors may invite a fellow governor to investigate the matter in conjunction with the Headmaster. The investigating Governor (or Chairman of Governors) will establish a Complaints Panel which will consist of two Governors having no direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint and one person who shall be independent of the governance, management or running of the School; one member of this panel will be designated as Convenor of the Complaints Panel. The Convenor will acknowledge the complaint and arrange a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 14 days of receiving the written complaint. The Panel may require further details of the complaint in advance of the hearing. Copies of any such details will be supplied to those involved in the hearing not less than seven days before its scheduled date. Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by another person eg, a relative, teacher or friend. The Headmaster shall be entitled to attend the Panel Hearing. The Panel will try to resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Should further investigation be required it will be conducted as directed by the Panel. The Panel will consider all relevant facts before reaching its decision about the complaint and making any recommendations within seven days of the Hearing. The Panel will convey its decision and reasons for it to the parents in writing, usually within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel’s findings and any recommendations it may make will be sent in writing to the Complainant, all Governors and the Headmaster. Where relevant, the person who was the subject of the complaint will receive a copy also. In addition, a copy of the Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

### **‘What happens about confidentiality?’**

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmaster and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. The only exception is where the Secretary of State, or Body conduct an Inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to the complaint/concern. It is the School’s policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

Cokethorpe School will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept until at least the next ISI inspection.

Parents may complain directly to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email on [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net).

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen very rarely where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or because it was necessary to refer matters to the police or if requested as required by paragraph (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations

whereby disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or if any other legal obligation prevails.

Following the resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a Panel Hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file for 25 years, anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

The School will investigate complaints relating to our fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

The record of all EYFS complaints will be made available to Ofsted. Should a parent wish to contact Ofsted directly, they can do so on 0300 123 1231 or at [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

### **Communication with the School**

Cokethorpe School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service for those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our 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.

Cokethorpe defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School, such as if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the School's Complaint Procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on School time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the School that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, telephone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

If the behaviour continues, the Headmaster will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Cokethorpe School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the School will immediately inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Cokethorpe School.

#### **Complaints during Academic Year 2022-2023**

Over the course of the academic year 2022-2023, there were no formal complaints received.