



HOLTON SLEAFORD

— INDEPENDENT SCHOOL —

Complaints Procedure Guidance

Stage One - Concern made to a member of staff

It is in everyone's interest that concerns/complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. It should be noted that the initial contact between the complainant and Holton Sleaford Independent School is crucial and can determine whether the complaint will escalate. It is important to take any query or concern seriously; it is helpful if staff can resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

When a complaint is made it is important for staff to respect the views of the complainant who indicated that he/she would have difficulty discussing the complaint with a particular member of staff. In this case, another member of the leadership team will take over and appoint another member of staff to take over if necessary (see organisational chart). This would be important if the complaint involved the Proprietor.

If the member of staff feels too compromised to deal with the concern/complaint, the complainant can be referred to another member of staff, not necessarily more senior but able to consider the complaint objectively and impartially.

Stage two - Complaint in writing to the Proprietor

The Proprietor may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision of the action to be taken.

Stage Three - Panel Hearing

The complainant needs to request a panel hearing in writing. Luke Hollingworth will appoint the panel of three members, one of which will be independent of the running and management of the school.

Note: The complaint would not be heard by all three independent panel members as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint. The Panel may choose their own chair.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The Panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It is important to remember:

The appeal hearing must be independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. It is important when deciding the make-up of the panel to ensure that sensitivity is given to race, gender, and religious beliefs.

The aim of the hearing, which should be held in private and at an impartial location, is always to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between Holton Sleaford Independent School and the complainant. However, there may be times when the complainant still might not be satisfied with the outcome if the panel does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that the complaint has been taken seriously.

The panel will be aware that many complainants may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting and parents could become emotional when talking about issues that affect their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The setting out of the room should be looked at to ensure it is informal and not intimidating.

If the complainant is a child, careful consideration should be given to the atmosphere and proceedings to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel should be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, the parent should be given the opportunity to say which part of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

The panel will be familiar with the Complaint's Procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

Administrator

An administrator will be assigned when a panel meeting is being arranged.

The administrator will be the contact point for the complainant and will be required to:

- Set the date, time, and venue of the hearing, ensuring dates are convenient to all parties.
- Arrange for any written material to be sent to parties in advance of the hearing.
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing.
- Record the proceedings.
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel is responsible for:

- Explaining to the parties the workings of the panel, the proceedings and how the outcomes will be advised. Ensuring each party can put their views across without undue interruption.
- The issues are addressed.
- Key findings of fact are made.
- Putting parents and others who are not used to speaking at hearings at ease.
- Ensuring the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating each other with respect and courtesy.
- Ensuring the panel is open minded and acting independently.
- Ensuring that no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or has been involved in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- Ensuring that each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- Ensuring all parties have the opportunity to see written material. If a new issue arises the opportunity should be given to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The Chair of the panel needs to ensure (through the Administrator) that the complainant is notified of any decision made, in writing. This should be within the timescale set out in the procedure. The letter will set out if there are any further rights to appeal and to whom they should be addressed to.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take into following into consideration

- The hearing should be as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Executive Head Teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The complainant may question both the Executive Head Teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Executive Head Teacher is then invited to sum up the School's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set timescale

<u>Written by...</u>	<u>Daniel Laughton</u>	<u>15/11/25</u>
<u>Approved by...</u>	<u>Mike Whatton</u>	<u>15/11/25</u>
<u>Signed...</u>		
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