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ASHDOWN HOUSE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY (INCLUDING BOARDING)

Aims of Ashdown House School with regard to complaints:

- The school has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care that is provided for the pupils.
- The school welcomes suggestions and comments from parents*, and aims to deal appropriately with any concerns that parents may raise. If, as parents, you have concerns, we would rather hear them as soon as possible. If in doubt, please contact the school as we are here to help. We aim to respond promptly and in a courteous and efficient way, in accordance with this policy.
- It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. It is best to start by contacting the member of staff most closely connected with the issue. A list of staff with contact details is given in Appendix A at the end of this policy.
- References to written communication include e-mail, but do not include any other forms of electronic communication (social media, text messages, etc.)
- All concerns or complaints will be treated seriously and, where appropriate, in confidence.

**References to 'parents' in this policy relates to parents of current pupils and includes 'carers' and 'guardians' of current pupils. This complaints procedure only applies to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered with the school.*

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Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- If parents have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's class/form tutor. The class/form tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints including the date on which they are received. The class/form tutor must inform a member of the senior leadership team of the nature and outcome of the complaint and this will be recorded in a central location.
- For more serious concerns or complaints, parents may choose to contact a more senior member of staff. Concerns or complaints made directly to a senior member of staff, if deemed appropriate, may be delegated to the relevant form tutor or other member of staff more closely associated with the pupil. (A written record will be kept as indicated in the above point and the Headmaster will always be kept informed)
- Initial contact with the school regarding concerns or complaints will be responded to within 24 normal school hours and the school aims to resolve any such concerns or complaints to the parent's satisfaction within 5 normal school working days.
- Informal (Stage 1) concerns or complaints can be made in writing. If the school receives such a concern or complaint in writing, this does not automatically make this a formal (Stage 2) concern or complaint.
- In most cases, the matter should be resolved within 5 normal working school days. However, parents may request a formal resolution and proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this complaints policy, or the Headmaster may ask a parent(s) if they wish to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy.
- If the parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's response to the informal concern or complaint, then they may request the establishment of a formal procedure for their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this complaints policy.

Stage 2 – Formal resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis in accordance with Stage 1, then the parents may establish a formal procedure for their complaint by submitting a written request to the Headmaster, for the matter to be considered further.
- Wherever possible the Headmaster will meet and speak with the parents concerned, usually within five normal school days (or up to 28 days if during the school holidays) of receiving the complaint, to discuss and attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the parents and the school. (A written record of this meeting will be kept and of any initial investigations undertaken)
- If it is not possible to resolve the matter during this meeting, or if the matter is considered sufficiently serious or complex, then the Headmaster, in liaison with the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the CEO of the Trust, will instigate a formal investigation into the complaint. The investigation will be conducted by the Headmaster or a member of the senior leadership team who has not previously been involved in the matter.
- The investigation will be conducted in a timely manner but with a thoroughness appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint. The person investigating the complaint will keep written records of all meetings and interviews and, if this is not the Headmaster, will report his or her

findings to the Headmaster. This investigation will be completed within 28 days of the initial contact and/or meeting with the parents following the receipt of formal complaint. (Unless there are fully explained extenuating circumstances for a slight delay, such as a school holiday)

- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the Headmaster, in liaison with the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the CEO of the Trust, will review the findings of the investigation and decide upon the outcome of the complaint. This decision, and the reasons for this decision, will be communicated to the parents in writing without delay.
- If the parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's response to the formal complaint, they may request a panel hearing and proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this complaints policy.

Stage 3 – Panel hearing

- If the complaint cannot be resolved in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy, then the parents may request a panel hearing by writing to the CEO of the Trust, with a copy to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and to the School's Headmaster, within 28 days of the receipt of the Headmaster's decision from Stage 2. **Please note that this does not entitle the complainant to insist on legal representation at a panel hearing.**
- The CEO of the Trust will inform the parents in writing of the date on which the matter has been formally referred to the panel hearing and of the procedure in respect of a panel hearing. This panel hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable after receipt of the parent's written request and within 28 days of the school receiving this request. (Unless there are fully explained extenuating circumstances for a further delay. If this is the case, then this further delay will be no longer than 28 days)
- The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. It is expected that members of the panel will have held positions of responsibility and be used to scrutinizing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments.
- If the parents making the complaint wish, they may attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied by one other person. **Please note, for matters to be brought to a proper conclusion, the hearing will proceed should the complainant be absent.**
- If possible the panel will try to resolve the parent's complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the hearing will be adjourned to allow this to be undertaken. The panel will arrange a new date for the adjourned hearing without delay and within ten normal school working days.
- At the hearing, after due consideration of the facts, the panel will decide upon its findings and recommendations. Within five days of the final panel hearing, the Chair of the panel will provide a copy of those findings and recommendations to the parents (complainants) and, where relevant, the person about which the complaint was made. A copy of those findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmaster, the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the CEO of the Trust.

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- The findings and recommendations of the panel will be considered by the Board of Trustees and the CEO of the Trust and any recommendations will be addressed without undue delay. Even when a complaint is not upheld, consideration will be given to improve school procedures and / or policies.

Record Keeping

- Written records will be kept in a central confidential register of all complaints whether they are resolved following a **formal** procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing, together with any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual **formal** complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, requests access to them.
- The Headmaster and the leadership team are also responsible for monitoring the frequency and nature of all recorded **informal** complaints and take action should underlying patterns emerge.

Complaints from pupils (incl. boarders)

- This policy also relates to complaints made by pupils. Children will be listened to, and not put under any undue pressure, if they feel the need to make a complaint in good faith.
- This complaints policy is made available for all pupils (including all boarders in accordance with National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools) on the school website: www.ashdownhouse.co.uk or from the school office.

Number of complaints (registered under the formal procedure during the preceding 12 months)

Number of formal complaints:	0
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APPENDIX A

School contact details:

Role	Name	Contact
Headmaster	Mike Davies	Headmaster@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Chair of Board of Trustees	Dr. Ralph Townsend	mail@cothill-trust.net 01865 390030
Trust CEO	Tom Beardmore-Gray	01865 390720
Deputy Headmaster (Director of Studies)	Patrick Mason	mason_p@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Headmaster's wife (Pastoral and Boarding)	Mrs Isabelle Davies	moore_a@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Head of Year 8	Mrs. Catherine O'Neill	oneill_c@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Head of Learning Support	Mrs Caroline Hawkins	hawkins_c@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Head of Sport	Philippa McCarthy	mccarthy_p@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574
Head of Music	Richard Coppack	coppack_h@ashdownhouse.com 01342 822574

All staff at the school may be contacted by email or telephone.

School contact details:

Physical address:

Ashdown House School

Hartfield Road,

Forest Row,

East Sussex,

RH18 5JY

Tel: 01342-822574

Fax: 01342-824380

Website: www.ashdownhouse.co.uk

Secretary: secretary@ashdownhouse.com

Emergency email address (will only be checked if the school's internet is down):

ashdownhouseschool@gmail.com

External contact details:

Description	Contact
Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)	CAP House 9-12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA 02 07600 0100 info@isi.net
Ofsted:	Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD 0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Appendix B:

Cross-referenced linked policies (all policies apply to Boarding):

1. Safeguarding Policy
2. Equal Opportunities Policy
3. PSHEE Policy
4. Learning Enhancement Policy
5. Staff Code of Conduct Policy
6. Whistle Blowing Policy

If the above policy is not found on our website, please request a copy of the policy from the school office.