



COTTESMORE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

The action taken by the school, as a result of a formal complaint, will be recorded regardless of whether it is upheld.

Cottesmore School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This policy covers all areas of Cottesmore – Pre-prep, Prep, day boarding and full boarding.

Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to school holidays and the unavailability of personnel. If any complaint is received outside of term-time, it may not be practical for the School to adhere to the timescales stated below. Reference to 'school days' means week days during the school term.

All full-time staff are in school from 8.00 until 6.00pm, Monday to Saturday.

The Headmaster is available from 7.30am until 10pm.

Staff and parents can also make an appointment with the Headmaster through the administration team.

Staff are encouraged to resolve issues immediately or offer to refer the matter to the Headmaster. Staff must log all complaints received, verbal or written.

Boarding pupils may raise a complaint through the Head of Boarding, the Worry Box, speaking to the Independent Person or by approaching any member of staff. We always try and resolve complaints informally, but where it is deemed necessary to take the matter forward we will inform the parents and follow the official complaints procedure.

The Head is the member of staff with responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedures and should be informed of any initial discussion that takes place with parents.

All formal complaints will be recorded so as to state the name of the complainant, the date received, the date resolved and the actions taken.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the person most closely concerned with the issue; this could be the Head of the department involved, for example the Director of Sport. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away, by these means, to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head or a member of the School's Senior Management Team.

A written record will be made of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. A resolution date will be logged. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. If however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head of the Governance Advisors, Gareth Doodes, via the school office on office@cottesmoreschool.com or 01293 520648.



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Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head.

The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head, in liason with the Deputy Head, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, and within 15 working days from the receipt of the complaint, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Head of the Governance Advisors, Gareth Doodes needs to be contacted through the school office on office@cottesmoreschool.com or 01293 520648. The Head of the Governance Advisors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Head of the Governance Advisors may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Head of the Governance Advisors is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed in writing and the reasons for the decision given. The Head of the Governance Advisors may seek advice from the other Governance Advisors.

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

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must do so within 1 month of the decision under Stage 2. They will be referred to the Proprietor, Tom Rogerson, at the School through the school office (office@cottesmoreschool.com or 01293 520648) who will call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School (please see Appendix 1).

Each of the Panel Members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Secretary to the Proprietor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 14 working days in term time, or 28 days during the school holidays.

If the Panel 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 three days prior to the hearing.

The parents 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.



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If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' 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 of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 15 school days of the Hearing. A resolution date will be logged. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governance Advisors, the Proprietor and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Head and Governance Advisors at the School.

Records

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State, or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 of the 2008 Act, requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The School will keep a record of complaints in the Office for at least three years.

Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or Ofsted

The School is inspected by ISI. Parents and pupils may contact ISI if they have a complaint concerning a pupil's welfare. However, ISI is not a complaints adjudicator and cannot investigate any concerns about a school, on inspection they look at how the school handles concerns. Please see <https://www.isi.net/safeguarding/concerns> for further information.

Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12, Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.
Telephone: 0207 600 0100

For EYFS pupils only

In addition or as an alternative to invoking the procedure contained in this policy, parents of EYFS children may, if their complaint is about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, complain to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted's contact details may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Complaints in the last academic year

Cottesmore School has had 0 formal complaint in the last academic year 2024/5. The Bursar keeps a written record of all formal complaints and outcomes.



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Appendix 1

Complaints Procedure - Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfES (as was) to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant:

'Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background - perhaps retired members of the Police Force - might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governance advisors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.'

Agreed by TFR September 2025