



UNICORN SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

*This procedure applies to all children at Unicorn School, including those in the EYFS.
Parents may read this procedure on the public section of the website.*

RESPONSIBILITY

Staff Member:	Head
Governors' Committees:	Risk & Compliance Education & Staffing

Last Reviewed:	October 2024
Reviewed by Committees:	November 2024
Noted by Governors:	November 2024

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure applies to all children at Unicorn School, including those in the EYFS.

This procedure is available to all parents on the School website. A written copy may be obtained on request from the School Office.

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is a complaint.

Please refer to the School's "Behaviour, Rewards, Sanctions and Exclusions" policy with regard to complaints relating to exclusions.

If the complaint concerns a matter relating to a possible breach of the School's obligations under Data Protection Law, then the first point of contact should be the Bursar, in his role to oversee the School's obligations as Data Controller. Please see the School's "Privacy Notice" for further details.

Unicorn prides itself of the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents (this term covers parents of both current and former pupils) do have a complaint then they can expect it to be treated seriously by the School and acted upon. It is hoped that most complaints (written or spoken) will be resolved quickly and informally.

A written record will be kept of all complaints. The written records will include a record of action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints must be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* requests access to them.

The record of written complaints will be kept for at least seven years.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If parents have a complaint they should contact their child's Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.

- The Class Teacher will keep a written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received.
- If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to then consult with the Head of Infants or Deputy Head and then on to the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Infants/Deputy Head/Head will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher unless the Head of Infants/Deputy Head/Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- In the event that the Class Teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to meet with the Head to discuss the issue. If this meeting does not resolve the issue, parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- We aim to resolve informal complaints as soon as possible and within 7 working, term-time days.

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

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution – Preliminary Stage

- The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned.
- 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. The written records will include a record of action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.
- Once the Head is satisfied, that so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for her decision.
- We aim to resolve Formal Complaints within 7 working, term-time days.
- 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 will be referred to the Chair of Governors who, on behalf of the Governors, will make provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by the Governors.

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. To enable this provision the Head is part of an IAPS database of prep school Heads who are willing to sit on complaints panels and have received training around this.

The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable.

- 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.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- We aim to resolve Stage 3 complaints within 15 working, term-time days.
- 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 seven days of the Hearing. The findings and recommendations of the Panel will be:

- (1) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. The Chair of Governors and The Head will also be sent copies as necessary.

(2) made available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

(3) made available to the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008*.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by Regulation 25 of the Independent Schools Standard Regulations 2013; where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act (Section 162A of the 2002 Act) as amended, requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Where the complaint reveals details of possible child abuse this information will be disclosed.

EYFS

All complainants regarding the EYFS will be responded to within 28 days of having received the complaint. However, we will aim to respond to complaints within the timescales of the main school as detailed above.

The record of complaints will be kept for at least seven years.

Parents in the EYFS are made aware that they can lodge a complaint with Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they believe the school is not meeting EYFS requirements.

OFSTED

Queries: CIE@ofsted.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 4666

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

CAP House

9 - 12 Long Lane

London EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100

Any unresolved complaints concerning data protection will fall under the auspices of the Information Commissioner's Office ("ICO"):

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

www.ico.org.uk

Helpline: 0303 123 1113

2022-23	<i>No formal complaints were received in the academic year</i>
2023-24	<i>3 Formal complaints received. Details are logged on the Complaints File.</i>

Updated October 2024

UPDATED SEPT 2022

UPDATED OCT 2021 KL

UPDATED OCT 2020 KL

UPDATED SEPT 2019 KT/KL

UPDATED MAR 2019 KL

UPDATED JAN 2018 KL

UPDATED Oct 2016 KL, reviewed by Risk Committee & noted by Governors' meeting

UPDATED Oct 2015 KL, reviewed by Risk Committee & noted by Governors' Meeting

UPDATED Feb 2015 KL minor change

UPDATED Nov 2014 KL, reviewed by Risk Committee & noted by Governors' meeting

UPDATED Oct 2014 KT

UPDATED June 2014 KL

UPDATED August 2013 KL (reference to Headmistress)

UPDATED April 2013 RL

UPDATED Sept 2012 KL/CM (new Ofsted address)

UPDATED JULY 2011 by KE/RL (Approved by Chair of Governors – VH, July 2011)

UPDATED DEC 2010 by RL (Approved by Governor in charge of regulations (December 10, to be confirmed by Board of Governors in March))

UPDATED 2009 RL/ KE (Approved by Governor in charge of regulations (December 09))