



DAVENIES

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

This Policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS.

Davenies has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint, however, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this Procedure.

The school has made this *Complaints Procedure* available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the School Office during the school day. The school will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the *Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014*, Davenies will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of the *Complaints Procedure* and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates is still registered as a pupil at the school.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school, about a specific Department, or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for all pupils; parents can be assured that a pupil will not be penalised for a complaint that a parent raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is within everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days (cumulatively) if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refer to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays, School holiday periods and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the school will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the school will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The school expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Stage 1 allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days, and it is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the relevant Pastoral Head, or the Deputy Headmaster, as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to one of the Pastoral Heads or Deputy Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher, unless it is deemed appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally (for example if the complaint is about the Form Teacher).
- The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within **ten working days** after it has been first acknowledged, or in the event that the Form Teacher and the parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised that they should also raise their complaint with the relevant Pastoral Head, or the Deputy Headmaster, if one or the other is not already involved. If a resolution is still not forthcoming, parents should 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 Chairman of Governors whose contact details are available on request from the Bursar.

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 Headmaster. Whilst all formal complaints should be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing. Complaints will only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the informal stage, and then only when the complainant intends to escalate the matter to the formal stage, or if the Headmaster considers that it is appropriate to progress to the formal stage immediately.

The Headmaster will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. He will then decide, after considering the complaint, on the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, normally within **ten working 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The Headmaster will speak to or involve other individuals as he considers appropriate and reasonable, including in respect of witnesses. The Headmaster will usually have an independent notetaker to support him with any meetings and interviews.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, as 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. In most cases, the Headmaster will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 10 working days of the complaint being put in writing (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Headmaster, if so requested).
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.

Where a parent is not satisfied with the School's response to their complaint at Stage 2 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 can escalate their complaint to the Clerk to the Board of Governors, the School Bursar, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. They should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Board of Governors within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2 setting out their grounds of appeal. A Panel Hearing should always take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have

impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Board of Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the school reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

- Once the complaint has been received by the Clerk to the Board of Governors, the matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Clerk to the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within five working days during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. He/she will aim to schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, and normally within 10 working days of the acknowledgement. The Panel will be appointed by the Board of Governors and will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Chair of Governors will appoint one member of the panel to act as Chair of the Panel. Members will be drawn from members of the Board but will also include one person who is independent of the management and running of the school ('Independent Panel Member'). The Independent Panel Member should be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments, e. g. serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, retired member of the police force or an individual with a legal background.
- 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 normally not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend but does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing. The Headmaster (the Stage 2 decision-taker) shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend but legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the Clerk to the Board of Governors as soon as possible and by no later than 2 working days before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The Panel Hearing should proceed notwithstanding the fact that the parents may subsequently decide not to attend, but this requirement does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition. If necessary, the Panel should consider the parent's/parents' complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel. Though the Chair will take into account any comments about the Panel composition or hearing, the Chair's decision is final.
- 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. There will not normally be a second Panel Hearing or follow-up meeting after this process has concluded.
- After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:**
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;

- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it normally within five working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, to the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster (Stage 2 Decision Taker). A copy of these findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

Persistent Correspondence or Malicious Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint, after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the school as vexatious and falls outside the scope of this procedure.

If at any stage of this procedure the School determines that a complaint is malicious or made in bad faith or if the parents continue to act in a vexatious manner after the School has confirmed the outcome to the complaint, the Headmaster and/or the Chair of Governors will consider any further action that may be necessary and may seek legal advice if the School considers the contact to constitute harassment. Further action may, in circumstances that cannot, in the school's view be resolved or that result in the irretrievable breakdown in the School-parent relationship, lead to the parents being asked to remove their son from the School.

Record of Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, which will contain all relevant correspondence, statements, findings, recommendations, whether they are resolved at the preliminary step of Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing, and actions taken by the School as a result of these complaints. For further information, please see the School's *Data Protection Privacy Notices*.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

In line with the advice of the DfE (September 2020), the full records of complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years, or for 3 years after a pupil has left Davenies, whichever is longer. Where there is a safeguarding issue, the full record of complaint will be preserved for the term of any independent inquiry and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if longer.

EYFS (Reception) Parents Only

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

For further information, please see the school's EYFS Policy.

Written Complaints relating to the requirements under the statutory framework for the EYFS

Davenies will provide Ofsted and/or the 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. Parents will be notified of the outcome of an investigation of any written complaints regarding the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements within 28 days (4 working weeks). The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years after the pupil has left the school.

Complaints to Ofsted and/or the ISI regarding EYFS Service Providers

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted and/or the ISI if they believe that as a provider the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements (*see below*).

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: info@isi.net

[ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA](#)

Record of Complaints

During the academic year 2025-26, there were two complaints registered under the formal procedure (Stage 2).

Updated: Autumn Term 2026, Headmaster

Review: Autumn Term 2027, Headmaster