



# Arbour House School

## Complaints Policy

Guidance for anyone with a concern or a complaint

|   |                                       |
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| Date Issued                                 | March 2023                            |
| First issue date                            | July 2017                             |
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| Next review date                            | March 2025                            |
| Governor policy owner                       | Bettina Jeppesen                      |
| Signed off by                               | Arbour House School<br>Governing Body |
| Distributed to                              | Internal/ External                    |

**Number of complaints for school year Sept 2022- Sept 2023 = 0**

## **Policy statement**

Arbour House School is committed to providing high quality opportunities for all our young people. We realise that sometimes mistakes are made or that we may not meet an individual's expectations. We want to deal with any issues, concerns or complaints as quickly and well as we can. We also use any feedback to make improvements. If you make a complaint you will not be treated less favourably as a result. We treat every complaint with fairness, honesty and impartiality. Support is offered to those who wish to raise a concern or make a complaint in a manner that meets their individual needs.

## **Introduction**

Arbour House School hopes that the adoption of a clear complaints procedure will help to ensure that complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly.

## **Definition of a concern/complaint**

Arbour House School defines a concern/complaint as being any derogatory comment or expression of dissatisfaction made about any situation at Arbour House School, whether justified or not.

## **Information which requires referral**

In some cases, such as Child Protection issues, there may be a need to pass on relevant information to the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Board, the young person's social worker or the placing authority. All relevant information will be shared in a professional and confidential manner.

**If the issue is about a serious safeguarding or child protection issue, or an allegation of abuse, the Headteacher should be informed immediately. The Arbour House School's safeguarding policy and procedures will be applied.**

## **External complaints**

The pupils of Arbour House School access the local community on a regular basis. There may be occasions when members of the local community may wish to complain. In dealing with complaints made by the general public staff should remain calm and advise the member of the public to put the complaint in writing to 'The Headteacher c/o Arbour House School-Confidential-Addressee only'.

## **Procedures**

There are three stages.

- Stage 1 Informal

- Stage 2 Formal internal review
- Stage 3 Formal panel hearing

Please note that when we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday when the school is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the school's website.

## **Stage 1 – Informal**

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. Initial concerns or complaints should be raised by speaking to the pupil's class teacher, who should establish whether you are raising a concern or lodging a complaint. The class teacher will make every effort to resolve things at this informal stage without the need to go any further.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

If having raised your concern with the class teacher, or if the class teacher is the subject of your complaint, then you should move onto Stage 2. To do this please make a formal written complaint to 'The Headteacher c/o Arbour House School-Confidential-Addressee only'. The Headteacher will then conduct an internal review to look at your complaint.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher it should be put in writing and sent to 'The Chair of Governors c/o Arbour House School-Confidential-Addressee' who will deal with the complaint following the Stage 2 procedures instead of the Headteacher.

## **Stage 2 – Formal internal review**

The Headteacher will arrange for your complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The Headteacher will attempt to resolve your concerns using any available means deemed appropriate. This may involve meeting with you to discuss the matter further. Any written complaint received by a member of staff will be passed directly to the Headteacher.

Following an investigation the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However, if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you with details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay. A copy of the letter will be attached to the complaint and filed in the complaints file.

If you are dissatisfied with the feedback from the school, then you should move onto Stage 3. To do this please write to the 'The Chair of Governors c/o Arbour House School-Confidential-Addressee only' within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

### **Stage 3 – Formal panel review**

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. They will then organise a formal Panel Review to hear your complaint. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of us sending the acknowledgment.

The aim of the hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The Panel Review will comprise at least two of the Board of Proprietors (who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint) and an independent member who is not connected with Potens or the school. You will be invited to attend the hearing; if you wish you can be accompanied by another person. If you are a pupil, your parent/carer will also be invited to attend the hearing.

All those involved will be notified of the decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. This will include any findings and recommendations made by the board. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

### **Appeals**

To appeal against a decision where the concern is not resolved to your satisfaction and you still feel aggrieved, you may write to:

Potens' Chief Operating Officer  
Nicki Stadames (confidential/addressee only)  
68, Grange Road West  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
CH41 4DB

### **Supporting our young people to raise a concern/complaint**

In recognition of the young people's difficulties with complex social and communication difficulties, particularly autism, the school welcomes complaints made on behalf of the young people from interested parties.

In the absence of an appropriate person we will support the individual to access the services of an independent advocate.

We also work with our young people to develop their understanding, communication skills and ability to recognise when they are not happy, the reasons why and how to make a complaint.

Pupils at Arbour House School have regular meetings which provide opportunities to comment on things, events, people, or activities that they have liked and not liked using individual communication systems.

Staff will support our young people to access the complaints procedure. There is a simple version of the complaints procedure which is available to all young people and staff will work to support individual learning styles and needs by providing alternative formats. When a young person needs another person to write down their feelings staff will make sure that the young person agrees with what others have recorded on their behalf and that the young person is provided with their own copy.

## **Recording concerns and complaints**

A written record of concerns and complaints, whether raised orally or in writing, and any action taken, will be held in the Complaints File, held in the school office. The records will indicate if the complainant raised a concern or lodged a complaint, and whether this was able to be resolved at an informal level or if it proceeded to a formal process. This record will include the following points:

- the person making the complaint
- the date of the complaint
- the nature of the complaint
- whether or not in writing
- a timeline of any action taken
- the outcome of any action taken
- final outcome of the complaint
- a timeline of correspondence held with the complainant.

Once the concern or complaint has been concluded all of the relevant paperwork including records of any correspondence are collated into one report. This report is held securely by the Headteacher.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or Ofsted, conducting an official inspection under the Education Act, requests access to them.

## **Staff being the subject of a formal complaint**

If a member of staff is the subject of a formal complaint then they are exempt from taking any responsibility for the consideration or response to the complaint.

## **Disciplinary action**

In some cases a complaint may lead to disciplinary action against an individual, for which there are separate procedures.

If this is the case the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action.

Under the Potens disciplinary procedures the outcome of these will remain confidential.

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| POLICY NAME     | Complaints Policy |   |
| COMPILED BY     | Bettina Jeppesen  |   |
| POLICY DATE     | July 2017         |   |
| REVIEW DUE DATE | REVIEWED          |   |
|                 | DATE              | BY (NAME)   |
| March 2023      | March 2023        | Julie Perks<br>Policy Review Record Added   |
|                 | Sept 2023         | Julie Perks<br>Updated 'Number of Complaints' for previous year on front of policy. |
| March 2025      |                   |   |
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