



Prince Henry's Grammar School

SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE



## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS RELATING TO SWIM ENGLAND QUALIFICATIONS (SEQ) APPROVED CENTRE**

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

This policy statement sets out our school's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints relating to the Swim England Qualifications Approved Centre.

Further details of how we handle them are contained in the procedures section of this document. Please note that our dealings to resolve a complaint will only be conducted directly with the affected customer, not any third party. This does not affect the proviso, set out in the procedures, that customers may be accompanied in meetings.

At Prince Henry's Grammar School we value good relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.

We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise all customers of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns about the Centre. In return, we expect complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately (e.g. through social media) or in front of students.

All Centre staff will receive a copy of this policy statement, and will be familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with customer concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required.

The school's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.

Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to close a complaint before all the stages of the school's procedures have been exhausted if this appears to be appropriate.

## **PROCEDURES:**

The majority of concerns are handled under the following general procedures. These procedures are divided into the following stages;

- a) The **informal stage** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.
- b) **Stage 1** is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Key Contact or an Investigating Officer
- c) **Stage 2** is the next stage once stage 1 has been worked through. It involves a referral to the Headteacher.
- d) **Stage 3** is referral to the Swim England Qualifications Awarding Body.

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

### **Informal stage – your initial contact with the school**

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact, in most cases, should be your tutor or Pippa McPherson, the Admin Manager: Community Engagement. This may be via telephone, email or letter. Please do not turn up at school without an appointment (unless there is a real emergency) as it is unlikely that anyone will be available to meet with you.

Once your concern is made known to us, we will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible. Staff will know how to refer to the appropriate person with responsibility for your particular issues if referral is necessary. He or she will make a clear note of the details, and will check later to make sure the matter has been followed up.

Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed will be communicated clearly, and we will confirm this in writing to you if required.

If necessary, we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.

We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries **within 10 school days**.

Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity to ask for the matter to be considered further.

If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage.

### **Stage 1 - formal consideration of your complaint**

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints to Marc Burrows, Executive Officer :Site and Facilities. It only applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above.

Normally, your written complaint should be in the form of a letter addressed to the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities. If, however, your complaint concerns the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities personally, it should be sent to the school marked *“For the attention of the Headteacher.”*

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be **within three school days**. The Executive Officer: Site and Facilities may appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate your complaint. If the complaint concerns the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities, the Headteacher will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate your complaint.

Normally we would expect to respond in full **within 15 school days**, but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay, and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.

As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint (not acting in a legal capacity). The Executive Officer: Site and Facilities or Headteacher, may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.

Following the meeting, the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities or Investigating Officer will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.

The Executive Officer: Site and Facilities or Investigating Officer will keep hand or typewritten records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.

Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give an explanation of the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities or Investigating Officer's decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.

The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. Further details about the closure of complaints are given later in this document.

If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to stage 2.

## **Stage 2 - consideration by the Headteacher**

If the complaint has already been through stage 1 and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to a Headteacher. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level.

The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of the Headteacher, who has no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

The aim of this panel is not to re-hear the complaint – they will not go through the case again. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly and that the correct procedure has been followed. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations, which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The Headteacher will aim to arrange for the meeting to take place within **20 school days** from the date of your request for a further investigation. Your request for a review should be lodged with the Headteacher within 10 working days of receiving the school's response to your initial complaint.

- You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal.
- The complaint investigator (Executive Officer: Site and Facilities or Investigating Officer) will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel highlighting the process followed as part of the investigation and any recommendations made. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
- You will be informed at least **five school days** in advance, of the date and the time and place of the meeting.
- With the letter, you will receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding stage 1 and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence.
- The letter will explain what will happen at the meeting and that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school or Centre. They are there to give you support, but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
- If it is necessary in the interests of ratifying the investigative process, the complaint investigator may, with the agreement of the Headteacher, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
- The Headteacher will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you, and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
- As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.

- The Headteacher will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. You will receive the written outcome of the meeting, which should give you all the information you require. If you would like to receive a copy of the minutes, please indicate this in advance of the meeting.
- During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
  - The panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at stage 2;
  - The panel to hear the complaint investigator's case in response;
  - You to raise questions via the Chair;
  - You to be questioned by the complaint investigator through the chair;
  - The Headteacher to be able to question you and the complaint investigator;
  - You and the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities to make a final statement.
- In closing the meeting, the Headteacher will explain that they will now consider their decision, and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Executive Officer: Site and Facilities **within three school days**. All participants other than the Headteacher and the Clerk will then leave.
- The Headteacher will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
  - reach a decision on the case;
  - decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary;
  - recommend, where appropriate changes to the centre's systems or procedures to make sure similar problems do not happen again.
- The Clerk will send you and the Headteacher a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The outcome, including any recommendations, may be helpful to you in seeking resolution of the complaint through the Swim England Qualifications Awarding Body if necessary.
- We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records, but separate from students' personal records.

### **Stage 3 – referral to the SWIM ENGLAND QUALIFICATIONS Awarding Body**

Where you have been through the school's internal complaints procedures and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision, you can write to the Swim England Qualifications AB Responsible Officer, Swim England Body, Sport Park, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough, LE11 3QF.

Please enclose a copy of the Headteacher's decision. This will save time in that the Swim England Awarding Body will not need to ask for our view of what has happened.

**We would advise customers that the Swim England Qualifications Awarding Body will handle the complaint in accordance with their Complaints Policy, which can be found on their website, [www.swimming.org/swimengland/](http://www.swimming.org/swimengland/)**

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