

Dominican College



Complaints Policy and Procedures A Guide for Parents

Introduction

There is a duty on all governing bodies to establish a complaints procedure for parents and guardians to make complaints about all matters related to school that are not covered under other statutory procedures. Communication, written or spoken, is valued as part of the partnership between home and school. From time to time difficulties and challenges will arise that need prompt and efficient resolution. The Complaints Policy and Procedure sets out clear steps to be followed in the event of a complaint, which allows all concerned an opportunity to express and resolve concerns at an early stage.

Definition of a Complaint

For schools, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction verbally or in writing by parents/guardians of pupils who attend the school. All complaints from parents/guardians of pupils who attend the school will be investigated as such. Anonymous complaints would not normally be considered under this procedure.

(The complete version of the Complaints Policy and Procedures can be viewed on the school website or on request from the secretary on 90 370298.)

Pupil Concerns

Any problems, complaints, or suggestions? If so, the school would like to hear.

- **How do I make a complaint?**

By talking about it or by writing it down if you find that easier. You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

- **To Whom?**

To anyone on the staff, but it is usually best to deal initially with the Year Head or class tutor.

- **Does it matter what the issue is?**

No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

- **What will happen next?**

If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

- **Do others have to know?**

If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff. They will understand and help you.

Even if you find the issue a difficult one, don't worry; you can approach your teacher who will only be interested in helping you.

How to approach Dominican College about a problem

When you are faced with a problem and wonder how best to approach our school about it, here are some guidelines:

- Your first contact should be with your daughter's Year Head. He/She has overall responsibility for matters regarding your daughter's year group and is best placed to investigate the problem or consult appropriate members of staff.

- Always keep in mind that school staff want to work with you to solve problems. Do not hesitate to call the school and ask the Year Head about the problem. He/She can often explain the incident and you will gain an understanding of what happened. In addition, there will be times when school staff are unaware of the problem and your call will help them learn about the situation and take action.
- Be aware that sometimes school staff cannot tell you about the incident or the action taken unless it directly affects you or your daughter. School staff cannot give out confidential information.
- Teachers cannot talk with you about your daughter when they are supervising pupils or teaching lessons but they will meet at a mutually convenient time. If you arrive without an appointment you will not normally be able to meet with teachers. You must call the school and the office staff will inform the teacher of your call and an appointment will be made.
- It is best not to go to the school management about the problem unless you have spoken to the Year Head and are not satisfied. If this first step is bypassed, it usually results in a chain of conferences/discussions that take time away from solving the problem quickly.
- If you are not satisfied after speaking with the Year Head, you can pass on your concern to the Senior Teacher who will consult as appropriate with the relevant staff. If matters are still unresolved you should contact (as appropriate), one of our Vice-Principals or, finally, the Principal.
- Try not to ask the school for something to be done, but be unwilling to have your name and any reference to the incident disclosed to the teacher involved. This ties the hands of school staff and hampers the process of finding the facts. In such a case, school managers will have to be very general when inquiring about the incident. What they can often do, if you do not want your name divulged or do not want anything done, is to monitor the situation carefully in order to try to avoid future incidents.
- Be sure that you have all the facts. Viewpoints and perceptions differ, and at times there are genuine reasons for a school action which cannot be revealed due to issues of confidentiality. It is worth considering that, sometimes when pupils describe situations that had nothing to do with them and involve other pupils or staff, they don't know what actually happened.
- Do not fear that if you talk to a teacher about a problem that the teacher will "take it out on your daughter." That would not be acceptable by anyone. Keep in mind that sometimes pupils may think they are being "picked upon" when teachers are trying hard to encourage them to achieve their potential by improving their concentration in class and submitting work.

- If your daughter is having a problem with another pupil while at school, it is best to check the situation with the Year Head first. Try to find out why the problem is happening. Teachers cannot make pupils be friends with each other, but they will insist that pupils be polite and respectful to each other. (You may wish to refer to our Anti-Bullying Policy which is available on the school website).
- Be assured that the school will listen carefully to your complaint. You should also listen carefully to what school staff tell you. Try to understand the problem from the viewpoint of the school.

Stages for Handling Complaints

Stage 1 (Informal)

- Expression of concern to Year Head
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
- Yes? **No further action**
- No? Intervention by Senior Teacher/Vice-Principal
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
- Yes? **No further action**
- No? **Stage 2**

Stage 2 (Formal)

- Complainant makes written complaint to Principal (or Chairperson of Governors if complaint is about Principal)
- Investigation conducted by Principal or Chairperson of Governors and reported to complainant
- Satisfactory outcome reached
- Yes? **No further action**
- No? **Stage 3**

Stage 3 (Formal)

- Complainant refers matter to Chairperson of Governors (or Complaints Committee of Governors, if Chairperson was already involved at stage 2)
- Investigation by Chairperson of Governors/Complaints Committee of Governors. Complainant and Principal attend.
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
- Yes? **No further action**
- No? Complainant may decide to proceed further outside school process