

The Jam Academy recognises that students and parents may have legitimate complaints relating to their study and experience while at the Academy. Such complaints should, wherever possible, be put simply, clearly and promptly, directly to the members of staff or student(s) concerned. It is the Academy's policy to respect the rights of any student to state a legitimate complaint and to expect such complaints to be dealt with without recrimination. Staff/Associates of the Academy are expected to treat legitimate complaints seriously, with due confidentiality where appropriate, to recognise that other members of the Academy may need to be consulted to resolve the matter; and to seek as speedy and as full a resolution of the complaint as is reasonably practicable.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved speedily by means of students pursuing matters informally, directly with the person concerned. In circumstances where the informal approach fails or where the matter is sufficiently serious or urgent, the formal complaints procedure may be used. Deciding how and where to begin to progress a complaint depends on the nature of the problem concerned and rests initially with the student affected.

The purpose of this document is to:

- indicate courses of action and options available
- indicate sources of advice
- advise and inform students
- advise and inform staff
- contribute to improvement of the quality of provision by encouraging positive action on critical feedback and resolution of problems. It is not possible to be prescriptive about the outcomes of resolution of individual complaints. Where a complaint is found to be justified, possible outcomes might include apology, a practical resolution such as restoration or improvement of inadequate facilities, a commitment to prevent/avoid recurrence of a problem, extension of deadline(s) for completion/ submission or other allowance of extra time or an opportunity to resit an examination or other assessment. In some cases assistance with transfer to another course or reimbursement of fees might be appropriate.

## **Formal procedures**

This Student Complaints Procedure cannot be used as an alternative means of appeal against decisions made under any other Academy policy or procedure.

If a student or parent who is pursuing, or who is the subject of, an investigation under one of these procedures makes a complaint under this Student Complaints Procedure, the complaint will be dealt with after the preceding investigation has been concluded.

In any case of doubt the matter shall be referred to the Principal for a ruling.

## Informal Stage

The objective of this stage of the procedure is to encourage the amicable and timely resolution or mediation of most student complaints without recourse to unduly formal proceedings. The student/parent should raise the problem with the member of Academy staff most directly concerned or connected and the student and member of staff should normally discuss the problem and seek to agree a resolution.

Where this is not practicable for any reason or the student/parent feels unable to approach that person, the student should without delay discuss the problem and its resolution as follows:

- Where the complaint relates to a teaching or Academy-related problem a student/parent should without delay discuss the problem with the Curriculum Manager.
- Where the complaint relates to any other aspect of the Academy's services or facilities other than a teaching or Academy-related problem a student should without delay discuss the problem with a member of the Senior Management Team.

In every case the student should not delay unduly in raising a justifiable complaint.

Students/parents are advised to keep notes made at the time or as soon as possible of:

- the date and nature of any incident giving rise to a complaint;
- the date(s) on which s/he took steps to raise the complaint and seek its resolution;
- the date(s) and content of any responses given.

If, having pursued the matter informally, the student believes that his/her complaint has not been appropriately, fairly or reasonably addressed the student may ask for Mediation or follow the formal stage below.

## Mediation

As an alternative to raising a complaint through the formal procedure or at any stage of the formal procedure, the individual may request that the matter is dealt with through mediation. Mediation is voluntary and will only take place with the agreement of all parties.

- Where mediation is agreed once the formal procedure has been started, the procedure will be adjourned whilst the mediation takes place. In the event that no mutually acceptable solution is reached through mediation, the procedure will be reconvened at the point of adjournment.
- Mediation will take the form of a relatively informal meeting, or series of meetings, involving the individuals concerned. The meeting(s) may be initially held with the parties separately, dependent upon the nature of the complaint. The mediation is with the Curriculum Director or the Principal. The mediator will be independent and neutral to the dispute and will be there to facilitate the parties towards a mutually acceptable agreement. If the dispute involves a member of the Senior Management Team, an independent person will be appointed by the school.
- If the complaint is resolved through mediation, the mediator will assist the parties to draft a written agreement that will be signed by both parties as acceptance of its terms.

## Formal Stage

The objective of the formal stage of this procedure is to help reach a prompt resolution of the complaint in cases where informal steps have failed.

A student/parent should put in writing a clear and concise statement of the complaint, details of any steps taken previously to address it, and submit it to the Curriculum Director – Mark Hartley.

- The Curriculum Director should normally respond in writing within ten working days. Such a period may be necessary to allow investigation of the matter. If it is not possible for a response to be provided within ten working days, written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be given within ten working days with an indication of when a substantive response will be made. The Curriculum Director may at his or her discretion request a meeting with the student/parent to discuss details of the complaint.
- A record of each complaint received under the formal stage of this procedure comprising the name of the student, the nature of the complaint and how it has been resolved will be kept on file.
- If, following receipt of the written response from the Curriculum Director, the matter remains unresolved, the student/parent may request a meeting with both the Curriculum Director and Principal to discuss the matter further. The student may be accompanied at any such meeting by another member of the Academy, another Student or their Parent/Sponsor. Any such meeting should take place as soon as possible and normally within ten working days of the student/parent's request.
- If a meeting takes place, the Curriculum Director shall provide the student with a written statement of its outcome and a written report of his/her decision on the matter, with reasons, normally within five working days.
- If a member of staff or a student is the subject of a complaint, the Curriculum Director shall ensure that s/he is given appropriate opportunities for representation during the investigation and is informed of its outcome.

## **Independent Review Panel**

If a complaint has not been resolved by the school's Principal and Curriculum Director OR the complaint is concerning the Principal and/or Curriculum Director, an 'Independent Review Panel' can be requested to consider the complaint.

The student/parent whose complaint is to be heard shall be entitled to be present at the meeting of the Independent Review Panel to give evidence and otherwise be heard and to have access to all relevant documents submitted. The student/parent will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of her/his choice who will also be entitled to participate in the proceedings.

The Independent Review Panel will consist of an independent chair person appointed by the Senior Management Team, and two two parents who do not have any connection with the incident/complaint. They will:

- be authorised to consult and/or invite any member of the Academy who in the Panel's opinion may contribute evidence or information to clarify or resolve the matter of the complaint.
- reach a decision on whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part or not upheld and shall produce a report confirming its decision and giving details and reasons.
- uphold a complaint in whole or in part, and shall determine the action to be taken and any remedy to be applied.

In cases where the Independent Review Panel does not uphold a complaint it may nevertheless recommend any steps that should be taken by the Academy in the light of any evidence received and considered.

- The student/parent shall be informed by letter from the Independent Review Panel's chair person, outlining recommendations and shall receive a copy of the report produced.
- If a member of staff or a student is the subject of a complaint, the Senior Management Team shall ensure that s/he is given appropriate opportunities for representation during the investigation and is informed of its outcome.

The decision of the Independent Review Panel will be final.