



PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy is applicable to all parents of pupils within the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), but is not legally bound to cover failure to admit pupils. It is also applicable to parents of pupils who have left the school, where the complaint was raised when the pupil was still registered. It does not cover exclusions, unless indicated otherwise.

This document is available in written format upon request and a copy can also be located on the school's website.

INTRODUCTION

This policy has been put in place to provide helpful clarification to parents of pupils about the school dispute resolution processes. The school has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with these procedures.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's teacher/form tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher/form tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department will usually be referred to the relevant teacher/form teacher on the same day or as soon as is practicable, unless the Head of Department deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- If deemed relevant, the teacher/form tutor will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within a maximum of 5 working days of the complaint being made, or in the event that the teacher/form tutor/Head of Department and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint to Stage 2 of this procedure.

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 Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally the same day that the complaint is received, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. These will be carried out within 2 working days of Stage 2 being invoked, or as soon as is practicable.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These records will remain on the pupil's file, which is kept in a confidential and secure location.



PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

- When the Head is satisfied that, so 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 person in a meeting or in writing. The Head will also provide reasons for his decision.
- The written decision will be issued within a maximum of 7 working days of Stage 2 being invoked. If for any reason, this is not possible, the Head will write to the parents within the 7-day period referred to above, stating the reason(s) why they are unable to issue the decision and informing the parents when they will be able to do so, which will be within 14 working days of receipt of the complaint being received, in any event.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, 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 will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel on behalf of the Governing Body. Should parents seek to invoke Stage 3, the request to seek a panel hearing must be confirmed in writing to the Chair of Governors within 28 days from the date Stage 2 is not satisfied. The Panel will proceed on a full merits hearing basis unless that parents later decide that they are now satisfied and decide not to proceed.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school (shall be outside of school's workforce, not a member of the governing/proprietary body, shall not be otherwise involved with the management of the school). Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 7 working days.
- 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 not later than 5 working days prior to the Panel Hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If necessary, the panel will consider the parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.
- 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. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 working days of the Panel Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and provide the reasons for the decision.



PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

- The Panel will ensure a copy of those findings and recommendations are:
 1. Provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person who is the subject of the complaint.
 2. Available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and/or the Head.

The school will keep a written record of all complaints and record whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel Hearing. The school will also keep a written record of action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be taken seriously.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the most recent version of the Independent Schools Standards Regulations, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Notes to the Complaints Procedure

- In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.
- In the event of a Panel Hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the Panel.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

Written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Parents of children in the EYFS may complain to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and only then if the complaint is about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements.

TIMESCALES FOR COMPLAINTS RECEIVED DURING HOLIDAYS AND PLAY SCHEME

The school is closed for six weeks each year, during which time, no staff are available. Therefore, any complaint arising during the closure will be dealt with on the first working day when the school reopens.

During play scheme, a member of the Senior Management Team is on duty each day. If a complaint is received during play scheme, the timescales contained within this policy will be followed. However, the Head, teaching staff and/or Heads of Departments may not be available to lead an investigation into the complaint or assist with any investigation. Therefore, in such cases, the school will endeavour to reach informal resolution (Stage 1) of the complaint within a maximum of 5 working days of the complaint being received. In the absence of staff members who are critical to the investigation of the complaint, Stage 2 Formal Resolution will commence on the first working day when normal term-time resumes. Parents will be informed of this circumstance within 5 working days of the complaint being received.



PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

PERSISTENT CORRESPONDENCE

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

RECORDS OF COMPLAINTS

The school will provide Ofsted and/or the ISI, upon request, a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and what actions were taken as a result of the complaint.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the school resolved 3 at Stage 2 and 0 at Stage 3 of the Parent Complaints Policy.

RECORD RETENTION

As per DfE advice, complaints which do not relate to safeguarding implications will be kept for a minimum of 7 years. Where a complaint does have regard to a safeguarding implication, the records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Details for contacting Ofsted are as follows:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us
General Helpline: 0300 123 1231

Details for contacting ISI are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Details for contacting the Chair of Governors are as follows:

Mr David Pye
Chair of Governors
c/o Milton Keynes Preparatory School
Tattenhoe Lane
Bletchley
Milton Keynes
MK3 7EG
Telephone: 01908 642111



PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has supplied the following guidance on the identity of an Independent Panel Member:

Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.

The Parent Complaints Policy was reviewed in September 2021 and will be reviewed in or before September 2022.

ADDENDUM COVID-19

The School will endeavour to work within the timescales mentioned above, however during the period of the COVID-19 (or other) pandemic, flexibility in the timescales may be required as a consequence of disruption or staff absence. Amendment of the timescales are therefore permitted if the process is hampered under these circumstances.