

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Mayfield Preparatory School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents, including parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in the EYFS.

A complaint will be treated as any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so and we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- Parents realise that we listen, take complaints seriously and we take action where appropriate;
- We keep a written record of all informal and written complaints for at least 7 years, detailing whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing; and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). 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;
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education act 2008 requests access to them;
- We will provide ISI (and OFSTED), on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.
- Anonymous complaints will not be responded to, with the exception that if we are faced with an anonymous allegation of child abuse which names both a member of staff and a child, we will handle it in exactly the same way as if we knew the identity of the person making the allegation.
- Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

The Complaints Procedure for Parents

Stage 1 – Informal Concerns

It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally, normally within 15 school days. The normal time frame will apply for complaints received in term time. Should a complaint be received outside of term time, a clear time frame will be established that will depend on the availability of staff.

If parents have a complaint:

- they should normally contact their son/daughter's teacher in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may then be necessary to consult a Head of Department, member of the SLT, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, member of the SLT, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Head of Department, member of the SLT, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The teacher will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received.

Most issues are expected to be resolved within 15 school days, through informal dialogue. In cases where no satisfactory resolution is reached within the timeframe, then parents will be advised that they have the option to escalate the matter to Stage 2 of this Procedure. Should the parents wish to proceed, they should submit a formal written complaint to the Headteacher within 15 school days.

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaints

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complaint should be put in writing to the Headteacher. The written complaint must include details of how the matter has been handled so far, copies of any relevant documents and a clear statement of the actions expected to be taken to resolve the issue.
- Upon receiving the written complaint, the school will provide a written acknowledgement within 5 school days.



- The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to the persons concerned, normally within 10 school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the person who has raised the complaint will be informed of this decision in writing normally within 15 school days from receipt of the complaint. The Headteacher will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the parents who raised the complaint are still not satisfied with the outcome, they will be advised that they have the option to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 of this Procedure. Should the parents wish to proceed, they should submit a written request that a Complaints Panel be convened to the Clerk to the Governors at clerk@qmfoundation.org within 15 school days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

- If the parents submit a written request that a Complaints Panel be convened to the Clerk to the Governors at clerk@qmfoundation.org within 15 school days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome, then copies of all relevant documents should also be included, along with the grounds for the complaint and the outcome the parents are seeking. The Complaints Panel will not consider any new complaints or unrelated evidence at this stage. Any new complaints must be initiated from Stage 1 of the procedure.
- The written request will be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt.
- The Governing Body will arrange for a Complaints Panel to be convened. The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; two members of the Complaints Panel will be members of the Governing Body, whilst the 3rd member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

When deciding on the selection of the independent panel member, consideration is given to people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. 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.

The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Complaints Panel, will then schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 school days of the receipt of the

written request, although the Complaints Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. At least 5 school days before the hearing, the parents will receive written notification of the date, time and location of the hearing.

- Copies of particulars of the complaint or any related matter shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Committee reserves the right not to consider any documents submitted after this period. The Committee is not required to hear oral testimony from witnesses but may choose to do so or accept written statements. Covert recordings or recordings without the consent of all parties involved will not be accepted.

- If it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date for the hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Complaints Panel may decide to the Complaints Panel may decide to proceed with the hearing based on written submissions from both parties.

- The person who has complained may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, interpreter or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Complaints Panel Hearing should proceed, notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. In these circumstances the Complaints 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.

- The hearing will ensure that each party has an opportunity to present their case to the Complaints Committee. The procedure for the hearing will be outlined in advance. The Clerk to the Governors will be present to take accurate notes of the proceedings. Electronic recordings of the hearing are not normally permitted and would only be allowed with the consent of all participants.

- The Complaints Panel reserves the right to modify the procedure at their discretion. For instance, they may require the complainant and the school representative to present their cases separately, without the other party present and reasons will be provided for any modifications.

- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

- After the hearing, the Complaints Panel will deliberate and provide both the complainant and the school representative with a written decision within 7 school days. The decision will include an explanation of the Complaint Panel's findings and reasonings. A copy of the decision and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Headteacher.



Confidentiality

The complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headteacher, the Governors and those directly involved. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their pupils.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. You would be fully informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file for at least 7 years, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

Subject to the following sections relating to complaints from parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and complainants will then be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

For parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, you have the further option to make a complaint to OFSTED (and/or ISI) if you believe the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

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