



St. Mary's College & Preparatory School

Complaints Procedure

2023-24

Reviewed by: M. Kennedy – September 2023
Date of Next Review: September 2024

This policy has been written in consultation with staff and governors of The College and Preparatory School and with due regard to the school's mission statement:

Our Mission is to provide an independent Catholic education for boys and girls of all faiths aged 0-18; to provide individual challenge towards holistic and balanced development, service and achievement for life and beyond; and to try to show our Faith by the way we live, showing care and consideration for each other, those around us and the environment.

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Introduction

The following is the Complaints policy for parents and prospective parents in compliance with regulations made under the Education Act 2002.

The School has confidence in and has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or prospective parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Policy.

Any complaint made must normally be within 3 months of the actual event. Any complaint made beyond this timescale may not be considered unless there are good reasons why the complaint was not made in time or the complaint is one that may impact upon safeguarding and keeping children safe in education.

If your complaint is about the Principal, you should raise the matter to the Chair of the Governors who may need to involve other governors.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form teacher. 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 be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Year, Senior Teacher, Vice Principal or Head of Preparatory School.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Year, Senior Teacher, Vice Principal or Head of Preparatory School will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless the Senior Teacher, Vice Principal, Head of Preparatory School deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher will make a **written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received**. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the Form teacher and the parent **fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2** of this policy.

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 Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally **within 7 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 Principal to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a convenor, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- **The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.** The Panel will consist of ***at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.*** Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the **Board of Governors**. The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 28 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.
- **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. The identity of any companion must be notified to the convenor at least 3 days in advance of the hearing. The companion will be required to agree to maintain appropriate confidentiality and the Panel reserves the right not to allow any individual to attend as a companion where that might result in a conflict of interests.
- 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 14 days of the Hearing. **The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.** The decision of the Panel will be final. **The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.**

Timescales

Please note that during holidays if staff are away a written complaint sent by post could take a significant proportion of the holiday to be responded to. Some complaints might involve interviewing staff and so the complaint would not be responded to until at least 10 working days into the next term or half term.

Further Information

Written records of complaints and any action taken will be kept for at least 7 calendar years after completion of the complaints policy and will be available to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.

Should a formal complaint directly involve or relate to a teacher, the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the policy being adopted in relation to management of the complaint and will be supplied with copies of relevant documentation. Should the complaint go on to Panel Hearing stage, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the panel.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Education (Independents School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

NB: The EYFS have a separate complaints policy.

Reviewed by MK 010916
Reviewed by MK 230518
Reviewed by MK 110919
Reviewed by MK 101020
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