



Complaints Procedure

**This document applies to all parts of The Pilgrims' School,
including parents and pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).**

Written by: Head
Approved by: Academic, Pastoral & Safeguarding Committee – November 2023
Approved by: Governing Body – November 2023
Next Review: November 2024

Rationale

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to pupils. However, if parents or pupils do have a complaint or a concern, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. Where the School's policies or the implementation of them are open to criticism, parents must feel able to express criticism without fear or favour, provided only that complaints are addressed in a constructive tone and spirit. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 22 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 30 working days. This document in no way is intended to inhibit the free flow of information and comment between parents and the various responsibility holders in the school.

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school will be regarded as a complaint. There is no difference between 'concerns' and 'complaints'.

This complaints process is available to parents of pupils, meaning current registered pupils. The procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils, but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered, and it does not cover exclusions.

It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. The timescale for acknowledging, considering and resolving complaints is set out in working days, which means term time only (Monday to Friday) and excludes bank holidays. The school will strive to deal with complaints during holiday periods but whether this is possible will depend on the nature of the complaint and to whom it is made.

All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints/concerns can be resolved informally and swiftly.
- Dependent on the nature of their complaint or concern, parents should normally contact their son's Form Teacher or Tutor. If the complaint is about boarding, then the relevant Housemaster should be contacted directly. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parent's satisfaction by this means. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, and depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary for him or her to consult one of the Deputy Heads in line with the School's management structure. Complaints made directly to the Head of Juniors, Head of Pre-Prep, Deputy Heads or Head may well be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The relevant 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 seven working days, or in the event that the member of staff 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 procedure. However, if the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, c/o The Clerk to the Governors.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then 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 meet the parents concerned 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.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and communicated to the parents in writing. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- The school will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and will advise parents of the decision within 15 working days of receiving the complaint in writing under Formal Resolution. In the event that it is not possible for the school to complete its investigation, or establish all the facts and so cannot make a decision within this period, then parents will be advised as to why this is the case and informed of the revised timescale.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Head within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2 setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- The matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by, or on behalf of, the Chair of Governors.
- The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The complaint will be acknowledged by the Clerk to the Governors on behalf of the panel within five working days.
- The Clerk to the Governors will schedule a hearing with the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint under Stage 3.
- If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- 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 manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the panel.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However, should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision, together with the reasons (within 5 working days of the hearing). The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. They will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Head and Chair of Governors.
- Provision will be made for a written record to be kept of all complaints and of whether they were resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing; a written record will also be kept of action taken by the school as a result of those complaints. The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure. In relation to these complaints, the school will record whether they are then resolved at that stage and what action was taken, or proceed to a panel hearing. Informal complaints may be recorded by the school for management purposes to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints, concerns, correspondence, statements and records will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

For the academic year 2022/23 the School received 0 formal complaints

EYFS

- Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. The Ofsted address: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by e-mail: concerns@isi.net. The ISI address is: ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
- A record of a complaint will be kept for three years.
- Parents will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 calendar days of having received the complaint.
- The complaints register and any action taken will be available to both Ofsted and ISI on request.