



ALTRINCHAM PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

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Responsible Person:	The Board of Governors
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Summary of changes:	Change of Leadership structure
Date of next review:	March 2024

This policy applies to Altrincham Preparatory School, including the EYFS. It is available to current and prospective parents upon request and is published on the School's website.

Introduction

Altrincham Preparatory School (APS) 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 with care and in accordance with this procedure. APS makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents, including parents of prospective pupils, by putting this policy on the School's website and in the School offices during the School day. APS will ensure that parents of pupils, and of prospective pupils, who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, APS will make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

Although this Procedure is made available, for reference, to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions of Contract in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you, or your child, raises in good faith.

The three-stage Complaint Procedure

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 contact their son's class teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Assistant Headteacher of their phase. If this additional layer does not allow the matter to be resolved, the class teacher and AHT should seek support and guidance from the Deputy Headteacher or Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to the Leadership Team, will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the Headmaster, Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The class teacher will inform their Assistant Headteacher of any complaints, who will record it (weekly) on the 'Concerns and Complaints' folder in the PLT folder on the One Drive. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the class 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 procedure.

- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors whose contact details are available from the School office on request.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should, within 14 days of the conclusion, put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Headmaster will meet the parents concerned within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If this is not possible due to an unforeseen obstacle, the complainant will be contacted to renegotiate the timescale. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster 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 writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. The Headmaster will make his decision and provide parents with reasons within 21 days of the complaint being put in writing. If this is not possible due to an unforeseen obstacle, the complainant will be contacted to renegotiate the timescale.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.
- 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 should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Panel (details provided from the School office) within 14 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. If this is not possible due to an unforeseen obstacle, the complainant will be contacted to renegotiate the timescale. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- The Clerk to the Panel, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 14 School term days.
- The school will give written instructions to the Panel members at the point a Stage 3 panel is convened. Such instructions should come from the Chair of Governors or the Clerk to the Governors. They provide an opportunity to confirm the remit of the Panel (their role and scope of power), timeframes, documents and document management.
- 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Headmaster shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
 - Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or part;
 - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or part; and
 - May make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.
- Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Headmaster to reconsider his decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmaster, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint in a timely manner.

During School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

Persistent Correspondence and Unreasonable Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, it can be regarded as vexatious and therefore outside the scope of the complaints procedure. The school will discuss such concerns with the complainant, explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, asking them to change their behaviour and noting that for complainants who cause a significant level of disruption, the school may not engage in further correspondence. Failure to reach a resolution of persistent, vexatious complainants could result in their son's place being revoked.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution

Parents whose complaint is unresolved by Stage 3, will be provided with the name and address of a certified alternative dispute resolutions (ADR) entity (such as mediation or arbitrations body) which should be competent to deal with any resolved dispute, should both parties wish to engage in ADR. The school is not obliged to engage in ADR, but is required to provide information to parents at the final stage of the procedure.

Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), the Stage 2 (formal stage) or proceed to Stage 3 (a panel hearing) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice which can be obtained from the School office or the website. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent

- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes and minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

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. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

APS will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

The number of complaints during 2021/22 was zero.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA