



ALTRINCHAM PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

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Responsible Person:	The Board of Governors
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Summary of changes:	Rewrite of sections - timeframes
Date of next review:	October 2026

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) values the quality of its relationships with parents and always seeks to do the right thing for every child and for the school as a whole. In the first instance, any parent or guardian is encouraged to make direct contact with the relevant member of staff whenever there is a query about which they seek clarification.

However, we recognise that, on occasion, conflicts of interest, misunderstandings and errors may occur between parents, pupils and teachers and concerns arise which may lead to a formal complaint. This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a parent or guardian wishes to make a complaint regarding their child or children. We always aim to deal with such complaints fairly, quickly and, in the first instance, informally. The following provides a statement of the clear and stepped procedures that we use in handling complaints from parents or guardians. The statement applies to parents or guardians of all pupils at APS, including Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

Although this Procedure is made available 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 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.

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 or about an individual member of staff. 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.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

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. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult with the Headmaster or Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Senior Leadership Team, will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the Headmaster or Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- Staff will endeavour to acknowledge emails, letters or phone calls of concern within two working days of their receipt and inform parents about how the school intends to investigate the matter. A written record is kept of all concerns/complaints, and the school's response, at this stage on CPOMS (Child Protection Online Monitoring System).
- Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working 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 Complaints Procedure. At this point the Headmaster will inform the Board of Governors of the complaint.

- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair 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 put their complaint in writing, within 10 working days, to the Headmaster.

The letter should contain

- a. full details of the original complaint and parental perspective
- b. supporting evidence to suggest that the original school decision was wrong
- c. the outcome that parents are hoping for

- The Headmaster will aim to acknowledge the complaint within two working days. The Headmaster may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster (or their nominee) will meet/speak to the parents concerned within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster (or their nominee) 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 (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Headmaster (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 10 working days of the meeting with parents. The Headmaster will also give reasons for the decision and include findings and recommendations in response to the complaint where relevant.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headmaster (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headmaster.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they may within 14 days of receipt of the decision of Stage 2, submit a written request to the Chair of Governors to appeal the decision at Stage 3 before a panel.
- The Chair will convene a panel composed of at least three people who have not, to date, been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, to hear the evidence and make a decision as to whether or not the complaint will be upheld. Typically, two members of the panel will be serving governors. One of the panel will always be independent of the management or running of the school. Parents and the School are entitled to provide evidence for their positions in advance of the meeting, and this information will be shared with all parties.
- The panel will endeavour to meet within 14 days of the letter having been received in order to discuss the complaint, unless particular circumstances force a delay. The parent may attend themselves, and be accompanied (but not represented), if they wish. Parents are given the opportunity to explain their position and supporting evidence in more detail (usually approximately 20 minutes) and the school is given a right of reply. The panel may ask further questions. The whole meeting usually takes place within an hour.
- The considered decision of the panel, including its findings and recommendations, will be notified to the complainant within seven working days of the meeting and will be final and binding. If the subject of the complaint is an adult working in the school, they will also be sent the findings and recommendations and a copy of the panel's findings will also be made available at the school for inspection by the Headmaster and Chair of Governors.

- 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 will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. There may be circumstances in which the School consider it necessary and appropriate to deviate from the Stage 3 procedure in the context of appeals for exclusion and required removal, and the School will inform the parents of this. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Stage 2 decision-taker to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmaster, that the Headmaster's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Headmaster to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

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 by the School as vexatious and therefore outside the scope of this procedure.

Former Pupils and Parents

The school reserves the right not to investigate a complaint from a former parent or pupil once they have left the school, or if more than three months have lapsed since the incident, depending upon the circumstances. A complaint from a former pupil/parent may be considered, in context, if the complaint started while the child was still a pupil at the school

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 formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) 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. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg. in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the

records as confidential.

For the academic year 2024/2025 the School received 1 formal complaint.

Early Years Foundation Stage (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.

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.

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: info@isi.net

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