iMap School

Complaints Procedures Policy

Please note: The policy is based on the procedures outlined in the DfE's 'The Independent School Standards' guidance which sets out requirements concerning managing complaints in independent schools. In order to meet the requirements, independent schools must have three stages in their complaints procedures: informal, formal and a hearing before a panel which must include an independent member. Schools can have processes with wider scope or more facilities for complaints than the standards require, so you must make sure you amend this policy to suit your school's procedures.

Date policy last reviewed: 5/5/26

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Statement of intent

Our School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services.

The school will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the school's website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

This policy also has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019) 'The Independent School Standards'

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies:

- Records Management Policy
- Grievance Policy

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A "**complaint**" can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A "**concern**" can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required; concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- "**Complainants**" are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A "**grievance**" is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.
- "**Days**" relate to school days.

Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents of pupils currently being educated at the school are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)
- Pupils
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupils

Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Informal raising of a concern

The school will endeavour to resolve most concerns informally.

Concerns will be raised initially as follows:

Type of concern	Individual to whom a concern should be raised
Educational issues	The relevant teacher – the concern will be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
Pastoral care issues	The principal
Behavioural issues	The staff member who imposed the behaviour sanction
Financial matters	The principal
Other concerns	The principal
Concerns regarding the principal	The chair of the proprietor body

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within five days or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the 'Formal complaint' stage of this procedure.

Formal complaint

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the principal. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales.

The principal will meet with the complainant within five days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. If the complaint is about the principal, the discussion will take place with the chair of the proprietor body.

During the meeting, the principal will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the principal or another designated member of staff. If the complaint is about the principal, the chair of the proprietor body will arrange any necessary investigations.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the principal will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

If the complaint is about the principal, the chair of the proprietorial body will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within 10 days from the receipt of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome suggested, they will be advised to proceed to the 'Panel hearing' stage of this procedure.

Panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor will be arranged.

The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school – this means they are not a member of the school's workforce or proprietor body and are not otherwise involved in the management of the school, e.g. a solicitor who regularly acts for the school.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 days. Reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure the complainant can attend the panel hearing. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, the hearing will still be held.

The complainant will be informed that they are able to be accompanied at the hearing if they wish; however, legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The right for a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative make representations on their behalf at a hearing, but the school will decide whether to allow this on a case-by-case basis.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information will be supplied to all parties no later than five days prior to the hearing.

After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and recommendations. The decision, findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within five days of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings, and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the principal and the chair of the proprietorial body.

The decision of the panel will be final and represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If it is found that the school has not met its requirements in relation to managing complaints because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on that complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard, so that future complaints are dealt with properly.

Recording complaints

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route, or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests to access them.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually. The next scheduled review date of this policy is 5/5/27.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.