



**Merchant Taylors'**  
**School**

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# Parents' Complaint Policy

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Author: Executive Team

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# PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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## 1 Introduction

The Schools have long prided themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, parents may occasionally raise a concern or a complaint. The Schools make no distinction between parental concerns and parental complaints. Any matter about which a parent of a current pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint and parents can expect it to be treated by the Schools in accordance with this Procedure.

## 2 Procedure Stages

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

### Level 1

- 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/Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Group Tutor/Head of School.
- The Form Teacher/Tutor or Group Tutor/Head of School 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 working days or in the event that the Form Teacher/Tutor or Group Tutor/Head of School 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.

### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

### Level 2

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the 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 speak to the parents concerned, within 7 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 the Head to carry out further investigations, which they will normally carry out within 14 working days.
- 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also 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**

### **Level 3**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, 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 Schools. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 working 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to 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.
- 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 appropriate recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 7 working days of the hearing. 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 Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Please note that in the event that a Subject Access Request is made after the Stage 3 Panel Hearing process has been initiated, the timetable otherwise applicable to the Stage 3 Panel Hearing process will be paused whilst the SAR is processed in the ordinary way in accordance with the timetable set out in General Data Protection Regulation Policy (GDPR) Policy.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

All complaints received will be reviewed regularly by the Senior Management Team in order to analyse trends and identify any patterns which may be present. A written record is kept of all Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing, and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Parents can request information on the number of complaints registered at Levels 2 and 3 during the preceding school year.

### **3 EYFS Complaints**

If the complaint is with regard to EYFS, parents may at any time contact OFSTED.

OFSTED  
Picadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### **4 Retention of Complaints Records**

As advised by the DfE, complaints which do not have safeguarding implications should be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Where a complaint does have a safeguarding angle, the records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

### **5 Persistent Correspondence**

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages as detailed above, this will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

### **6 Reference**

Independent Schools Inspectorate Handbook for the Inspection of Schools – The Regulatory Requirements September 2020