



Chesham Preparatory School

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Note: This policy applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as to the whole school.

Introduction

Chesham Preparatory School prides itself on the quality of the teaching, extra-curricular opportunity and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can be assured that it will be treated seriously and confidentially. Complaints will be dealt with by the School fairly and swiftly in accordance with this policy and procedure.

This policy is available on the school website for the parents of current and prospective pupils and is updated annually.

The School will ensure that this procedure is followed for complaints by parents of pupils but the School is not required to follow this procedure for complaints by prospective parents or parents of past pupils (unless the complaint is initially raised when the pupil is currently attending the School).

In accordance with paragraph 33 (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) regulations 2014 (known as the ISSRs), Chesham Preparatory School will make available to parents of pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Under EYFS regulations, in the event of a complaint or a concern we follow the written procedure. This includes keeping a written record of any complaints and the outcome. All written complaints will be investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in the best interests of all parties concerned to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete Stages 1 and 2 of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the appeal panel hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days if the appeal is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording complaints

The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal resolution stage or whether they proceed to a panel hearing. A written record will be kept of any action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- date when the complaint was raised;

- name of parents;
- name of pupil;
- description of the issue under investigation, records of all investigations (where appropriate);
- records of witness statements;
- name of members of staff handling the issue at each stage;
- copies of all correspondence (including emails and records of telephone conversations).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Related policies:

- Admissions Policy and Procedure
- Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Restraint Policy and Guidelines

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. There are many avenues of communication available for parents to meet with relevant staff and discuss any concerns with a view to swift resolution.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child’s teacher or tutor. In most cases, issues can be resolved straightaway to the parents’ satisfaction. If the teacher/tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- Concerns raised directly with a member of the SMT will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the member of the SMT (line manager) deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. In that case the appropriate line manager will attempt to resolve the matter in 5 working days or as soon as is practically possible, to the mutual satisfaction of all parties.
- The relevant teacher and senior manager will make a written record of all concerns and complaints, including the date they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or, in the event that the 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.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents should state their complaint, in writing, to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will consider the complaint and decide on the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet the parents concerned, normally within 2 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations. If so, he will appoint a member of the SMT to investigate by conducting interviews and gathering any relevant

information. This member of the SMT shall be the “Investigating Officer.” Such investigations will be completed within 7 days or as soon as is practically possible.

- Written records will be made of all meetings and interviews, and these records will be held in relation to the complaint, to be made available for the Headmaster, the parent making the complaint and any third party about whom the complaint is made.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he will act as “Deciding Officer” in relation to the complaint. Parents will be informed by the Headmaster of his decision in writing with the reasons for that decision.
- The written decision will be issued within 14 days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headmaster will write to the parents within the 14 day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he is unable to issue his decision and informing the parents when he will do so, which will be within 28 days of receipt of the complaint in any event.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- A written record will be kept of all formal complaints (for three years) including whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.
- All 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 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

Stage 3 - Panel hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision from the Headmaster, parents wishing to take a complaint further may invoke Stage 3 of this procedure by appealing to a panel of the school governors. Parents should contact the Clerk to the Governors at bursar@cheshamprep.co.uk, who is appointed by the governors to call hearings of the complaints panel. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint on behalf of the governors within 5 working days (or as soon as is reasonably possible if within the school holidays). The matter will then be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by, or on behalf of, the Chairman of Governors.
- The panel will consist of at least 3 persons who are 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 on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.
- If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they 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 days prior to the hearing. Any such further particulars received within 5 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.
- One other person may accompany the parents to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be deemed appropriate.

- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. If, however, the panel decides further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how it should be carried out and by when it should be concluded. The panel shall reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within 14 days of the first hearing whenever possible but within 28 days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the School by paragraph 6 (2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003; by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families; or where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- The School follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2008) and informs parents that they may make a complaint to Ofsted and ISI if the complaint concerns the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements. A record of any such complaint will be kept for at least 3 years.
- ISI telephone number: 0207 6000100. Ofsted telephone number: 08456 404040

Contact for Ofsted and ISI are as follows:

ISI
 Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
 Email: concerns@ISI.net
 Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Ofsted
 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
 Telephone: 0300 123 1231

The Headmaster will communicate any formal written complaints (Stage 2) received by the School in his end of term report to the full board of Governors.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Under EU regulation, and from 1 October 2015, ADR applies to all contracts for services, and the School's contracts with parents comes under this regulation.

ADR may take effect when the School's internal complaint procedures, as detailed in Stages 1–3 of this policy, are exhausted without resolution.

In the unlikely event that such a situation arises, the School is required to provide parents with:

- correspondence which states that the School is unable to settle the parental complaint;
- the name of an ADR provider (including website address) that could deal with the complaint, if the parent wishes to use ADR.

It should also be noted, however, that the School is not required to submit to an ADR procedure.

Policy reviewed: September 2018

Next review: September 2019

Person responsible: The Headmaster