



LIFE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from school.

Monitoring and review:

- This document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headteacher.
- This policy was last reviewed agreed by the Advisory Board in January 2021 and will next be reviewed no later than January 2022 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Sarah Quilty
Headteacher

Alastair Saverimutto
Chief Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

LIFE SCHOOL itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to all of its pupils. However, if staff or parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This is a whole-school policy, which also relates to out of school provisions. It is the aim of this policy to resolve complaints either to the complainant(s)'s satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome, which balances the rights and duties of complainant(s), without unreasonable delay. Pupils will not be penalised for a making a complaint in good faith.

STAGE 1 INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- Any person with a complaint or concern should raise it in person with the member of staff/individual concerned.
- The member of staff/individual involved will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. It is hoped that the majority of complaints/concerns will be dealt with at this stage. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the member of staff/individual and the complainant(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the complainant(s) will be advised to proceed with their complaint/concern in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

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STAGE 2 FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint/concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainant(s) should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will either meet or speak to the complainant(s) concerned, normally within 7 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 Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint/concern.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant(s) will be informed of this decision in writing within 14 days, if possible. The Headteacher will also give reasons for his decision.
- Should parents have a complaint about the Headteacher it must be put in writing to the Chief Executive Officer who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. 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(s) remains unhappy with the response from the Headteacher, they will be referred to the Advisory Board who will arrange an appeal by the Complaints Panel. A panel hearing should take place unless the complainant(s) later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
- If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with this policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate exercising the right of attendance.

The matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel within 7 days for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and at least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. The independent member should not only be outside the school's workforce, and not a member of the proprietorial body, but also should not be otherwise involved with the management of the school, for example, a solicitor who regularly acts for the school. Examples of persons likely to be suitable for the role of the independent panel member would be serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force. Two members will be advisors and one will normally be the Chief Executive Officer.

The Clerk to the Chief Executive Officer, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 7 days of referral to the panel.

- 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 2 days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This provision does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing, although the school can allow this, if it wishes. This may be a relative, teacher or friend.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complainant(s)'s complaint immediately 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 days of the hearing.
- The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or in writing to the complainant(s) and, where relevant, the person complained about. These findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises and kept by the Headteacher for at least 3 years and a copy will be held by the Chair of the Advisory Board. The decision of the Panel will be final.

SUMMARY OF TIME SCALES

During School Time:

- Stage 1 Informal Resolution: Resolved within 7 days or progress to Stage 2.

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- Stage 2 Formal Resolution: Response to complainant(s) within 7 days for informal meeting to resolve. If still unresolved or further investigation needed, a letter from the Headteacher will be received within 14 days of the initial meeting.
- Stage 3 Panel Hearing: Complaint to Complaints Panel within 7 days. Date of hearing to be set normally no later than 7 days. Copies of particulars of complaint supplied to all parties not later than 2 days prior to hearing. If possible, the complainant(s)'s complaint will be resolved immediately. If further investigation required, a decision will be sent within 5 days of the hearing.

During Holiday periods

- The complaint will normally be resolved within 28 days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case, the complainant(s) will be kept informed.

GENERAL

The complainant(s) can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The school and the proprietor keeps a written record of all complaints for at least three years and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. The record includes serious complaints and their outcomes for regular review by the Headteacher. A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing. In addition, a record will be kept of any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); together with the outcome (i.e. resolved or proceeding to panel hearing). The record of complaints will be available on the school premises via the Headteacher and Chair of the Advisory Board and will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

The complainant(s) can make a complaint to Ofsted. The relevant contact details are as follows:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, general helpline 0300 123 1231, telephone number 0161618 8524.