

## Complaints Procedure Guide for Parents

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At the heart of Prebendal is concern for the well-being of our pupils. We want to do our best for them and we listen to them and to our parents. We do our best but at times we may get it wrong and we want you to tell us if we do. That way we can improve what we do, not just for you and your child, but for others as well. We take all complaints very seriously and are grateful to everyone who brings shortcomings to our notice. We regard a complaint as a form of unpaid quality control. This procedure applies to complaints relating to all pupils including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which involves the notification of the Chairman of Governors either by the Head Master or the Parent.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time courteously and efficiently
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we take action where appropriate

All complaints will be treated professionally and no child will be treated differently or discriminated against because that pupil's parents have made a complaint.

“How do I make a complaint?”

Talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter or telephone. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. In virtually all cases things can be sorted out quickly, with the minimum of fuss.

Any member of staff will be happy to help. It will usually be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue; however, you may prefer to take the matter directly to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Deputy Head or the Head. If you have a concern regarding individual teaching you should normally talk to the teacher concerned, then the Head of Department, then the Director of Studies and then the Head. If your concern is about behaviour and pastoral matters you should contact the Form Teacher first, then the Deputy and then the Head.

“What will happen next?”

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

In many circumstances, the matter will be resolved informally straight away to everyone's satisfaction. In other cases the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague, or colleagues, and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by

which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

The teacher concerned 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 one month, or should the teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory conclusion then parents will be advised to proceed to stage 2 of this procedure.

### Stage 2 Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, who will then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action.

In most cases the Head will meet, or speak to, the parents concerned, normally within one week of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The Head may need to carry out further investigations.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head is satisfied that, as far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents informed of this in writing, with the reasons.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision they should proceed to stage 3 of this procedure.

### Stage 3 Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke stage 3, following failure of an earlier resolution, they should write to the Chairman of the Governing Board who will refer the matter to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Panel, appointed by the Board of Governors, will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The convener of the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical, and normally not later than one month of working term.

If the Panel deems it necessary it may require further particulars of the complaint or any related matter to be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of all such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 14 days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person, who may be a teacher,

relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required the Panel will decide how it is carried out. After consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall normally complete within one month of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel shall be final. The Panel's findings, and any recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors, and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made.

“What happens about confidentiality?”

Your complaint or concern 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) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. It is Prebendal's policy that complaints made by parents do not rebound adversely on their children.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will normally be handled confidentially

In all cases a record of complaints will be kept for three years from the resolution of the complaint.

Complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within twenty-eight days of receiving a complaint.

Parents may, if they wish, make a complaint to Ofsted (0300 123 4666) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (Telephone 020 7600 0100).

The School will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result of the complaint.

The number of formal complaints (complaints referred to the Governors Committee), received during the academic year 2010/2011 was 2.