



# Pilgrims School

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## Parental Complaints Policy

September 2019

Next review date: September 2020



Please note: 'School' refers to Early Years Foundation Stage (Little Pilgrims and Pre School) and Pilgrims Main School.

### **Introduction**

Pilgrims Pre-Preparatory School prides itself on the quality of its teaching and the pastoral care it provides to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be dealt with by the School in accordance with this Policy. This Policy is available on the website and in hard copy on request.

### **Policy Aim**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice; it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances. We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to our school culture. Parents and pupils should never feel (or be made to feel) that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or their opportunities at this school.

### **Policy Status**

This Policy has been approved by the Governing Body of the School and provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It takes account of paragraph 33 of Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. The policy applies to all sections of the school [*including Early Years*].

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are 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.

The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain parts of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.

### **Application**

The procedure described below is available to pupils and parents of pupils and applies to all pupil and school issues. Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue or if the Headteacher expels or asks a pupil to leave and the parents seek a Governors review of the decision.

### **Parent**

The term parent includes a parent of a current pupil or legal guardian or education guardian, and may at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School.

## **Management of complaints**

The Headteacher will be responsible for the co-ordination and administration of the Complaints Procedure. If the Headteacher is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, his / her duties will be carried out by a member of the Senior Leadership Team

The main responsibilities of the Complaints Co-ordinator are to:

- *be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved and keep records*
- *co-ordinate the complaints procedures in school*
- *arrange assistance for parents who require this, for example, because of a disability*
- *maintain an on-going training programme for all School employees in relation to complaints*
- *monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints*
- *report regularly to the Headteacher with respect to complaints.*

## **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Parents can make a complaint to Ofsted and / or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) although it is expected that complaints will progress through this procedure first. Details of how to contact Ofsted and / or ISI are given at the end of the procedure.

## **The Procedure**

### **1. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

1.1 All complaints are taken very seriously, particularly those involving discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Other examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally at this stage.

The School will acknowledge a written notification by email, letter or telephone within two working days<sup>1</sup> of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during holidays.

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<sup>1</sup> When we use the term "working days" we mean Monday to Friday during term time. It may take longer to process complaints received during the last few weeks of term or during holidays due to the availability of staff.



1.2 If parents have a complaint concerning education or pastoral matters they should normally contact the person responsible for a child's pastoral care – e.g. class teacher/keyworker. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If this person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with their Line Manager who will then deal with the matter.

1.3 A problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it and, if not resolved, with the Headteacher.

1.4 A query relating to financial matters (fees etc) should be stated in writing to the Bursar.

1.5 Complaints made directly to the Head of Year may be referred to the relevant teacher or keyworker unless it is felt appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

1.6 On occasions, complaints or concerns may be dealt with by members of the senior leadership team (including the Headteacher) but still be resolved informally and successfully.

1.7 Should the matter not be resolved within 15 working days then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Policy.

Every complaint notified to a member of staff that has not been resolved informally will be noted, together with the action taken and collated by the Co-ordinator.

## **2. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis as described in Stage 1, or if it has not been resolved within 15 working days, then the parents should put their complaint in writing<sup>2</sup> to the Headteacher. She will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. This must be done even where the informal process has been conducted with the Headteacher. If parents require assistance with their request, for example, because of a disability, the School will be happy to make appropriate arrangements<sup>3</sup>.

2.2 In most cases, the Headteacher will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

2.3 It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations or to ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator. The

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<sup>2</sup> When we refer to notifications or requests in writing, both letter and email are acceptable

<sup>3</sup> Please note that the School will be very happy to arrange assistance if required, through the person coordinating complaints, in the event of any difficulty in submitting any request in writing required by this Policy.



Investigator may ask for additional information from you and may wish to speak to you personally and to others who may have knowledge of the circumstances.

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

2.5 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for this decision. The Headteacher's aim will be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution of the complaint with 28 working days from the first receipt of the complaint.

2.6 If parents are dissatisfied with the Headteacher's decision under Stage 2 they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Policy.

2.7 Complaints about the Headteacher, when not resolved at Stage 1, will then be dealt with under the Stage 2 - Formal Resolution process. Parents who wish to make a complaint about the Headteacher should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

### **3. Stage 3 – Reference to the Complaints Panel**

3.1 **Introduction and Scope of the Hearing.** A Complaints Panel (Panel) hearing is a review of the actions taken previously. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint, which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure. The Panel will not seek to substitute its own judgement for that of the Headteacher where the Headteacher's decision falls within the bounds of what a reasonable Headteacher, acting proportionately, might have decided given all the facts. If there has been a complaint against the Headteacher taken to Stage 2, because the Chair will have already been involved they cannot be on the Complaints Panel.

3.2 **Notification.** If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Chairman of the Governors, within five working days of receipt of the Headteacher's decision, requesting a Panel hearing. Parents must state in their letter full details of the complaint, the outcome sought, the grounds on which they wish to appeal against the decision of the Headteacher and enclosing all relevant documents and full contact details. Parents should also include a list of the documents which they believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see. If parents require assistance with their request, for example, because of a disability, the School will be happy to make appropriate arrangements. The parents' letter will normally be acknowledged by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within five working days, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.