

NOTRE DAME SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



1.0 Introduction

Notre Dame School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching, support services and pastoral care provided to its pupils and staff. However, when there is a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Notre Dame School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and to staff on Firefly.

In accordance with paragraph 32(3)(f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Notre Dame 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 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

2.0 What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent or member of staff believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

3.0 Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Written complaints regarding the fulfilment (not provision) of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days.

The School will make available the details of how to contact ISI/OFSTED.

At Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

4.0 Recording Complaints and use of personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice available online. When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records policy but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

5.0 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Class/Form teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway, to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, Head of Year, Pastoral Director, an Assistant Head or the Head teacher.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/Head of Year will usually be referred to the relevant Class/ Form teacher unless the Head of Department/Year deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Class/Form teacher will record all concerns and complaints including 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 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.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head teacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the Bursar's Office on request (bursar@notredame.co.uk).

6.0 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head teacher (**APPENDIX 1**). The Head teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is a non-teaching matter it will be passed to the Bursar.

- In most cases, the Head teacher or Bursar will contact the person making the complaint, 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 teacher or Bursar to carry out further investigations, and this may alter the time scale.
- The school will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head teacher or Bursar 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 or Bursar will also give reasons for the decision where possible however, there may be legal reasons when this information cannot be shared with parents or a 3rd party.
- If the complaint is against the Head teacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head teacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If complainants are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

7.0 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 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 school. 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 normally within 14 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.
- 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 should be carried out.

- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head teacher.
- A copy of the Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head teacher.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

8.0 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Notre Dame School will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints relating to the requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFS made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

For the academic year 2019/2020 the School received the following number of formal complaints

Number of Stage 2 complaints:

Senior school 3 (resolved)
Prep school 0

Number of Stage 3 complaints:

Senior school 0
Prep school 0

Drafted	P Clifton	Jan 2016
Reviewed	M D-Aprano	Oct 2018
Reviewed	A King	Mar 2019
Amended	G Finney	Sept 2019
Amended	G Finney	Oct 2019
Amended	G Finney	Oct 2020
Amended	G Finney	Sept 2021

APPENDIX 1 - Complaints Form for Stage 2

Your name and address (and child's class if relevant):

Brief outline of the complaint:

Details of what happened, witness names and contact details, further information:

What do you think should have happened in these circumstances?

What outcome are you hoping to achieve?

Please sign and date, to confirm that the information you have given is complete as you understand it.

The Head (or Bursar) will reply to you within 7 working days, and inform you if there is the need for further investigation, which may extend the timeframe.

Signed:

Date: