



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Central to the philosophy of the school is 'openness'. Children, parents and staff are encouraged to be open in their views, and to question the way things are done. This extends to 'complaints'. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines a complaint as an 'utterance of grievance' or 'formal accusation'. Before a 'complaint' reaches the formal stage, it will often be the case that a prior concern has already been raised at an informal level.

The formal complaints procedure is not a substitute for good day-to-day communication where we encourage all parties to discuss and resolve issues in a supportive atmosphere. Many problems can be solved on an informal footing very satisfactorily if all parties are prepared to keep the channels of communication between themselves open and working well. The formal procedure is designed to deal with those issues that need to be approached on a more structured basis so that every route to a satisfactory solution can be explored and so that any decisions reached, or actions agreed are binding and long lasting.

All new parents are notified that this policy is available on the school's website (www.moorpark.org.uk) and are informed that they may have a hard copy on request. In addition, parents are notified if there has been a significant revision to the policy so that the changes can be viewed on the website. The policy satisfies the requirements of Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Contact numbers for the appropriate local and national safeguarding and regulatory authorities are included in the contacts list at Annex A of the Child Protection Policy.

The policy is in two parts. The first is a description of the general avenues available to children, staff and parents to raise concerns or complaints and the procedure that will be adopted to handle complaints at the informal level. The second is a description of Moor Park's formal complaints procedure which is made available to staff and pupils as well as parents.

General Avenues of Communication

Children

Children are encouraged to speak out and air their views and concerns. Serious issues are more likely to be raised verbally than in writing but the basic principles of the formal complaints procedure would be followed.

- Form Teachers/Tutors: Children meet daily with their Form Teacher and regularly with their Tutors, with a longer form teacher/tutor period once per week. The first contact point for any concern or query.
- The School Council: Meets twice a term and comprises elected representation from each year group with children meeting beforehand to discuss issues they would like raised.
- Pupil Voice Sessions: An opportunity for pupils from each class to meet informally with the Headmaster to raise any areas of concern.
- The School Counsellor/s: An opportunity for confidential access to an independent adult (see Child Protection Policy and 'Key Contacts').
- 'Suggestions Box': Kept in the Stone Hall, an alternative method for the children to voice their ideas, concerns or complaints.



- **Boarding Staff:** Key contacts for boarding pupils. It is policy to ensure that the children are given the opportunity to speak with a member of staff that they feel comfortable confiding in, whether it is a pastoral concern or a complaint.

A list of people whom children may contact if they are worried or if their concerns are not being heard is posted by each telephone. This includes the school counsellors, Childline and the local safeguarding authority. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

Staff

- **Induction Process:** A programme of reviews and provision of information designed to address any initial concerns of new staff. All new staff are given a 'mentor' with whom general issues can be discussed.
- **Staff meetings:** Usually held at the start of each term and weekly are both opportunities to raise any general concerns or issues.
- **Chapter:** A daily information meeting where urgent issues can be raised.
- **Appraisals:** Every two years staff will be reviewed where personal and career issues can be discussed.
- **The Head:** In keeping with the 'openness' of the school, the Head has an 'open door policy': staff are positively encouraged to air their views, safe in the knowledge that any matter discussed, whenever possible, will remain confidential.
- **Grievance Procedure:** The 'formal' complaints procedure for staff.

Parents

- **Form Teacher/Tutor:** The first contact point for most issues. The form teacher/tutor has a pastoral and academic remit for all pupils in his/her form.
- **School Secretary:** A communication point who can advise on, and refer the complaint to, the best person for a particular issue.
- **Informal meeting with the Head:** However small the concern, any parent should not hesitate to approach the Head if they feel most comfortable broaching a topic at this level.
- **MPPA:** A useful forum of parents to air general concerns.
- **Formal Complaints Procedure:** For serious issues or where a parent remains dissatisfied after less formal approaches.

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 son/daughter's Form Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head/ Head.

Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head/Head will usually refer to the relevant Form Teacher/Tutor or Houseparent unless the Deputy Head/ Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.



The Form Teacher/Tutor or Houseparent 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 14 days or if the Form Teacher/Tutor/Houseparent and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with the Formal Complaints Procedure set out below.

Formal Complaints Procedure

All concerns and complaints should, ultimately, be brought before the Head whether formally or informally. If it has not been possible to resolve a particular issue at the informal level a formal complaint can be lodged with the Head. This procedure applies equally to the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as the remainder of the school. Any complaint deemed to have reached the formal stage will be recorded in the complaints file kept by the headmaster. These records will be added to should the complaint proceed to a panel hearing. Records will contain the action taken by the school because of the complaint regardless of whether they are upheld. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Raising the Complaint

A formal complaint should be lodged in writing with the Head stating the nature of the complaint and, where relevant and practical, an outline of any informal representations already made.

The school will respond in writing within 48 hours from receiving the formal complaint setting out the action it intends to take in investigating the complaint and the likely timescale.

The length of time needed to resolve the complaint will be dependent on the nature of the issue raised but the school will aim to resolve any complaint within 28 days of the complaint originally being made.

The Head will inform the Chair of Governors of any formal complaint.

Investigating the Complaint

The Head will make an initial investigation that will normally include a meeting with the complainant.

The Head will notify the complainant in writing if the issue has been resolved at this stage or whether further investigations and meetings with the complainant will be necessary.

Notification of Response/Resolution

The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

A copy of the findings and recommendations of the investigation will be given to the complainant, Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person being complained about.

If the allegation involves a child and or staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage, we will provide Ofsted on request of a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and action taken.

Appeal (Panel Hearing)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, he/she may appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors within two weeks of receiving the school's response.



The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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. The Head, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 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 normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the matter 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.

The Panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 14 days of 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. The finding and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmaster and Governors.

Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 6(3)(f) of the Education (Independent Schools standards) (England) Regulations 2010 (as subsequently amended), 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.

Complaints regarding the welfare of boarders

The procedure set out above satisfies the requirements of Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, for boarders and their parents to raise complaints and is made available to boarders, their parents and staff for their information. In addition, boarders and parents can contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA or telephone 020 7600 0100 and their Local Authority Designated Officer regarding any complaint concerning a boarder's welfare. Any such complaints are documented in the same fashion as is detailed elsewhere in this policy.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. Any complaints reaching the formal level or above will be recorded (see whole school policy) and the record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Although the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is responsible for inspecting the Early Years classes in the Pre-Prep School, because it is part of an independent school, parents should be aware that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they are entitled to make a complaint directly to Ofsted. They can download the Ofsted



leaflet: "Complaints to Ofsted about Schools: Guidance for Parents" reference 080113 from www.ofsted.gov.uk or alternatively contact details are as follows: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD, general helpline 0300 123 1231; textphone number 0161 6188524 or Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) on 0345 6789008.

For more details please refer to the Tick Tock Complaints Procedure. Tick Tock Registration Number: EY294910

Number of complaints in the past academic year - two