Mayfield	Policy Name: **Complaints Procedure (parents)** Owner: Headmistress Last Reviewed: October 2026 Next Review date: October 2027 This policy will be reviewed in response to regulatory changes or as required. Purpose of Policy: **To ensure that parents understand the process for raising a complaint with the school**

Contents

1 Introduction 1
2 The Aim of this Procedure 1
3 Scope and Application 2
4 What Constitutes a Concern or Complaint? 3
5 Timing 3
6 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution 3
7 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution 5
8 Stage 3 – Appeals Procedure Panel Hearing 6
9 Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints 7
10 Persistent correspondence 7
11 Complaint Campaigns 8
12 Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data 9
Annex 1 – Stage 2 Submission Form – Formal Resolution 11
Annex 2 – Stage 3 Submission Form – Appeal Panel Hearing 13
Appendix One: Flow Charts of the Complaints Procedure 15

1 Introduction

Mayfield has a long tradition of excellence in both academic provision and pastoral care. It is essential for us to work closely with parents, whether at home or abroad, to ensure that we provide the best possible education for each girl, both inside and outside the classroom. We aim to encourage academic rigour while nurturing individuals pastorally and spiritually, allowing each girl to be herself and ensuring that she is ready to 'respond to the needs of the age'.

2 The Aim of this Procedure

The aim of this procedure is to achieve a fair, effective and timely resolution of parental concerns regarding the education and/or welfare of individual students in the care of Mayfield School.

The procedure allows for informal resolution or a formal process if that is not achieved and to provide an effective response.

It allows the school to achieve its aims for an open, purposeful and equitable culture.

The process is also key to evaluating school provision and making changes where necessary.

3 Scope and Application

This procedure applies to all parents of current students (i.e. students for whom education is being provided at the School, or past students if the complaint was raised when the student was still registered). Please note that although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them.

While this procedure is primarily for parents, pupils who wish to raise a concern or complaint may do so through the School's Pupil Voice and pastoral support systems. Serious matters raised by pupils will be addressed in line with the principles of this policy.

A copy of this procedure is available on the School's website and can also be obtained on request (and in large print, if required) from the Headmistress's EA, Mrs Frangella-Cramp lfrangella-cramp@mayfieldgirls.org. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available on request from the Headmistress's EA.

In accordance with paragraph 32 (1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will also make available, on request, to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

The School will not normally investigate or respond to anonymous complaints; however, the Head and Chair of Governors will determine whether an issue raised in this way requires investigation.

Every reasonable complaint will receive fair and proper consideration, along with a timely response. A complaint can be considered as an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. Any parental complaint regarding the school, an individual member of staff, or any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action from the school falls within the scope of this procedure. Complaints about any School policy or administration affecting their children must be made in accordance with the following procedure, except where the complaint relates to an exclusion, which will be handled under the School's Behaviour, Rewards, Consequences and Pupil Voice Policy.

The School has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.

All parents should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, students or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.

There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified. Complainants will be notified of the changes.

The School is here for your child, and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint you raise in good faith.

4 What Constitutes a Concern or Complaint?

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

5 Timing

Equitable and effective resolution of concerns usually requires that they are brought to the School's attention promptly, normally within three months of the relevant event(s). Complaints may be heard after this if the Head or Complaints Panel considers that the delay will not prejudice resolution and that the reasons for a delay are valid. All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively.

Timings for the various stages of the process are set out below.

For the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. During School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint, although the School will make reasonable efforts to avoid undue delays.

The Complaints Procedure

6 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern or complaint regarding routine matters such as study, lost property, school organisation or information, they should contact their daughter's Form Tutor or Housemistress as soon as practicable. In many cases, the matter can be resolved immediately to the parents' satisfaction. The tutor or Housemistress will acknowledge the complaint promptly (and within 5 working days) and aim to resolve the complaint with the student or parent.

If the issue concerns an individual's academic progress, health, welfare or happiness, no matter how small it may seem, the Form Tutor or Housemistress [depending on whether it is a boarding or day issue] should be the first point of contact.

In the majority of cases the matter will be resolved by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with other staff in the School. The Tutor can discuss the matter with the Head of Year or Head of School, as appropriate, to determine if it should be escalated. If the issue concerns academic progress in a specific subject, the Head of Department should be involved. If there are problems with work across multiple areas, the relevant Heads of School / Head of Year should always be consulted, and they will liaise with the Director of Teaching and Learning or the Deputy Head Academic as appropriate.

If the issue involves bullying, emotional distress, family problems or social integration, the Tutor and staff with pastoral responsibility play a vital role. For Years 7 and 8, these matters are initially addressed by the Head of Lower School; for Years 9, 10 and 11, by the Head of Year; and for Years 12 and 13, by the Head or Deputy Head of Sixth Form. In all cases, support and guidance may be sought in consultation with the Head of Pastoral Care or the Senior Deputy Head as appropriate.

If the parents' complaint concerns a particular teacher, they may feel more comfortable with referring it to the Senior Deputy Head or Deputy Head Academic, or, if the issue is pastoral in nature, to the Head of Pastoral or to the Director of Boarding for boarding-related concerns. The Headmistress will always be kept informed. The Headmistress can be involved at any stage if necessary and appropriate, and parents should feel able to consult her. However, it is usually more effective to seek early resolutions by first discussing the matter directly with the relevant members of staff, and **then**, if no solution is reached, with the Senior Deputy Head or the Headmistress.

In serious matters such as allegations of professional misconduct or competency, parents should approach a member of the Senior Leadership Team [SLT] and, for competency matters, provide a detailed written account of the complaint. In cases of misconduct related to child protection, the nationally recognised guidelines set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education September *2025'* will be followed. All such matters will be kept confidential or on a 'need to know' basis unless a formal investigation is necessary within the school. Any such complaint would be referred by the Headmistress to the Local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub [In East Sussex this is accessed via the Single Point of Access (SPOA)]. Initially, the Headmistress will consult the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice. The Local Authority will decide the appropriate form of any investigation and whether the school or outside agencies, including the police, should be involved. The Governors of the School will be kept informed, and may be involved, depending on the investigation's outcome. Such issues are covered in the Disciplinary Policy, which deals with staff disciplinary matters.

In the event of there being an unresolved complaint against a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headmistress, this matter should be taken directly to the Chair of Governors who will convene the independent panel as specified in this document.

Complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headmistress will usually be passed back to the relevant Form Tutor, Housemistress, Teacher, and/or the Head of

Department and Head of School / Pastoral Leader, unless the Senior Leadership Team member, or Headmistress deems it appropriate to handle the matter at a higher level.

The Form Tutor, Housemistress, or the person handling the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and complaints including the date they were received and will undertake a full investigation. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days, [or another reasonable period to allow for reports etc.] or if the Form Tutor or Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

7 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, parents should **submit their formal complaint in writing (see Annex 1)** to the Headmistress at headsoffice@mayfieldgirls.org. The Headmistress will review the complaint and determine the appropriate course of action.

The Headmistress may, in some circumstances, deem it appropriate to nominate a senior member of staff to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headmistress (or her nominee) will review the complaint and determine the appropriate course of action.

The Headmistress, or a senior member of staff, normally the Senior Deputy Head, or the Deputy Head Academic will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 2 formal complaint as soon as possible and within 5 working days.

The Headmistress, or a nominated member of the senior staff will investigate. This may include requesting further information from the parents and/or a meeting with the parent and others to ascertain relevant details. A written record of the investigation will be held, in accordance with data protection principles.

Once the Headmistress (or her nominee) is satisfied that all relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmistress (or her nominee) will also provide reasons for the decision. In most cases, this will occur within 10 working days of the written acknowledgement. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The school will keep a written record of the complaint, the School's response and any action taken by the School.

If the complaint is against the Headmistress, and it has not been resolved informally, the parent should send the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors at abunce@mayfieldgirls.org. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed, with any references to the Headmistress (or her nominee) being replaced by the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to handle the complaint against the Headmistress.

If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, they may proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

In the event that the Head has been involved in Stage One of the complaints process, the Senior Deputy will assume the role of the Head should the complaint proceed to the next stage. This ensures impartiality and continuity in handling the matter.

8 Stage 3 – Appeals Procedure Panel Hearing

If parents wish to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of the Governors' Governance Committee, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. They should do so in writing (see Annex 2) to the Clerk to the Panel via abunce@mayfieldgirls.org within five working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

The Clerk will acknowledge the written notice within 5 working days, and will refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors, who will appoint the members of the Complaints Panel. The Clerk will act as secretary to the Complaints Panel. The Clerk will report to the Chair and the Headmistress to confirm that consideration of the complaint is proceeding in accordance with this procedure but not in respect of the substance of the panel's consideration.

The Complaints Panel will consist of three members, two of whom will be Governors and one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. None of the members will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

A Hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable, normally within six weeks of receipt of the parents' letter. If this timeframe is not practicable, the Clerk will write to parents within the six weeks and agree, with them, an alternative timeframe.

The parents should supply relevant documentation to the Clerk, including copies of their previous written complaint to the Head and any other documentation they may wish to rely on, not more than 7 working days after the date of notification of the Hearing. Documentation must be relevant to those matters set out in the complaint.

The Clerk will collate all relevant papers and provide a copy of the full complaint file to the parents not less than 10 working days before the hearing. The papers will also be provided to each member of the Complaints Panel and the Head. The relevant papers will include the complaint in writing made by the parents and any relevant documents provided by them, and the response by the School and members of staff, setting out clearly the School's investigations, conclusions and actions to date.

The Complaints Panel will determine the terms of reference for the Hearing and the steps to be taken leading up to and during the Hearing. It will seek to establish if there are gaps in information, and it may request further facts, evidence or analysis ahead of the hearing.

Parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person. This could be a relative or friend. The hearing is an internal proceeding, not legal proceedings, therefore it is not possible for legal

representatives to attend. The Hearing will proceed even if parents choose not to attend, unless they indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed.

After due consideration of all facts presented at the Hearing which it considers relevant, the Complaints Panel will make its findings and recommendations. The Clerk will send a copy of the decision and the reasons for it to the parents, the Chair of Governors, the Headmistress and other members of staff involved (such as the person being complained about, where relevant) within 5 working days of the Hearing. The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.

The decision will be available for inspection at the School by the Head, Governing Body or the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

The full Board of Governors or their delegated sub-committee shall consider all Complaints Panel decisions and recommendations and determine what further action should be implemented by the School.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. All records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where dictated by any other legal obligation.

9 Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible; the School's target is to complete Stages 1 and 2 of the procedure within twenty working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, should be completed within an additional thirty working days.

Resolving a complaint may take longer if statutory agencies are involved (for example, the Local Authority or the Police), during periods of significant disruption to School life, or due to unavoidable staff absence. Therefore, the timeframes set out in this Procedure may change depending on the circumstances of an individual case. Any deviations will be on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to minimise such delays, informing parents if any revisions to the timeframes are necessary.

10 Persistent correspondence

The Procedure should be used as a mechanism for resolving issues in good faith and in a courteous manner. It should not be used in an abusive, threatening or vexatious manner.

Once a complaint is made by a parent and while it is being addressed under the complaints procedure, we request that the parent refrain from repeated correspondence or contact with staff members that may be considered vexatious.

If a parent makes repeated attempts to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, the School will regard this as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

If a complaint is deemed by the School to be unreasonable or vexatious, the School reserves the right to take no further action under this procedure.

The school defines 'unreasonable' as anything which hinders the consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- refuses to co-operate with the complaint investigation process.
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on.
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- seeks an unrealistic or unmeritorious outcome.
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- uses threats to intimidate.
- uses abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence.
- knowingly provides falsified information.
- publishes unacceptable information related to the complaint on social media or other public forums.

11 Complaint Campaigns

The school defines complaint campaigns as the receipt of large volumes of complaints which are all based on the same subject or the receipt of numbers of complaints from complainants unconnected with the school. In such an event, the school will expect to provide a response within 30 working days using a template response to all complainants. Alternatively, the school may choose to publish a single response on its website.

12 Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or by an inspecting body acting under statutory authority, including under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or where the School is required to share information relating to a child protection concern or to comply with its legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligations. Following the resolution of a complaint, the School will maintain a confidential central written record of complaints raised under this procedure, including those resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3. This record will note the stage at which the complaint was resolved, whether any Stage 2 complaint proceeded to a Stage 3 Panel Hearing, and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. 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 and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Third party and internal reports
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy), potentially including information relating to physical or mental health, where necessary due to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings as required by regulation, in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy, and Retention of Records Policy. All records related to complaints will be treated as confidential. In addition to requests by the Secretary of State or an inspector (as mentioned above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or specific confidential records is required, such as in response to legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligations (e.g. in response to a subject access request) that takes precedence over the requirement to maintain confidentiality.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Once invoked, a formal written complaint will be documented and a thorough record will be retained in accordance with the procedure from the initial notification through to the final conclusion, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

Records of complaints are retained centrally in the Complaints file held by the Headmistress.

Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted at: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Telephone: 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI can be contacted at: ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA Telephone: 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

You may also contact the Children's Commissioner about your concerns:

Contact us | Children's Commissioner for England (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT, 020 7783 8330.

Regulatory or legal requirement addressed by policy:

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSR)
National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (DfE, 2022)
Education and Skills Act 2008
Children Act 1989; Childcare Act 2006
Data Protection Act 2018
Equality Act 2010

For the academic year 2024-25 the School received 2 formal complaints.
For the academic year 2025-26 the School received 0 formal complaints.

Annex 1 – Stage 2 Submission Form – Formal Resolution

Please complete the relevant form below and submit it to the Headmistress, who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken:

The Headmistress
Mayfield School
The Old Palace
Mayfield, East Sussex
TN20 6PH
headsoffice@mayfieldgirls.org

Your Name:
Pupil's Name:
Your relationship to the Pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Daytime phone number: Evening phone number: Email Address:
Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, events, key evidence etc.) in order to allow the matter to be fully investigated. (You may attach additional documents if you wish; please be sure to number them clearly.)
What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. with whom have you spoken or to whom have you written and what has been the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the issue at this stage?
If you are attaching additional documents, please number these attachments and list details below.

Signature:	Date:

For School use only
Date of complaint form received:
Date acknowledgement sent:
Complaint referred to:
Date complaint referred:

Annex 2 – Stage 3 Submission Form – Appeal Panel Hearing

Please complete and return the below form to the Clerk to the Governing Body, who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken:

Clerk to the Governing Body
Mayfield School
The Old Palace
Mayfield, East Sussex
TN20 6PH
abunce@mayfieldgirls.org

Your Name:
Pupil's Name:
Your relationship to the Pupil:
Address: Postcode: Daytime phone number: Evening phone number: Email Address:

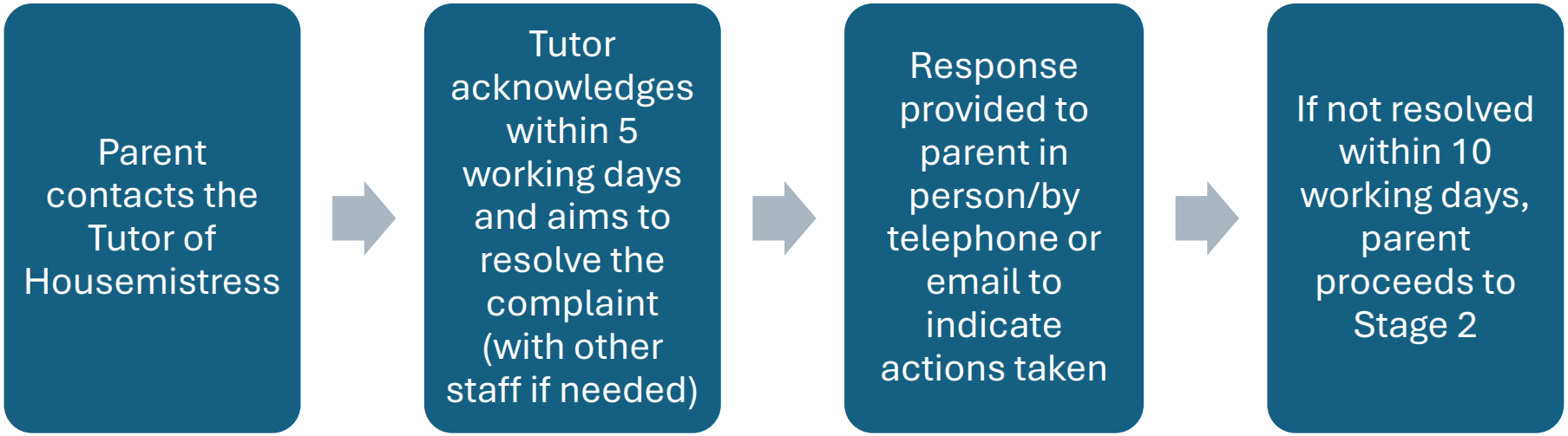
Dear Madam I submitted a formal complaint to the School on……and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed and/or the outcome. My complaint was dealt with as a Formal Resolution Complaint following the School's procedures and I received a response from the Headmistress on …….. I am dissatisfied by the way the procedure was carried out because:

And/or by the final outcome because: (you may continue on separate sheets or attach additional documents if you wish. In this case, please number the attachments and list details below)
What actions do you think might resolve the issue at this stage?
I would like the panel to conduct a hearing a) On the papers b) At a meeting that I will attend At the meeting I would like to be accompanied by the following:
Signature:
Date:

For School use only
Date of complaint form received:
Date acknowledgement sent:
Complaint referred to:
Date complaint referred:

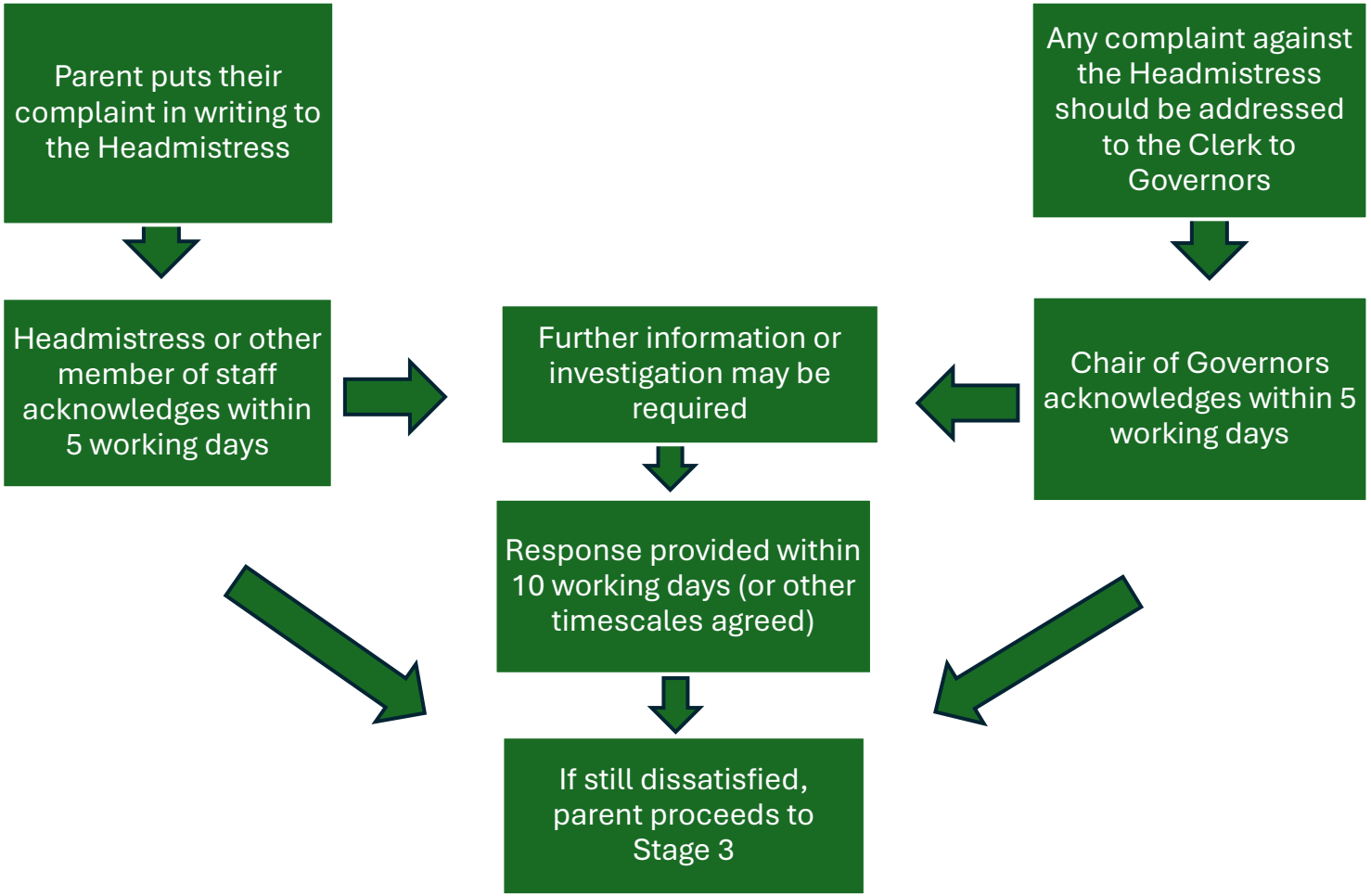
Appendix One: Flow Charts of the Complaints Procedure

A parent/carer has a complaint
Stage 1: Informal resolution

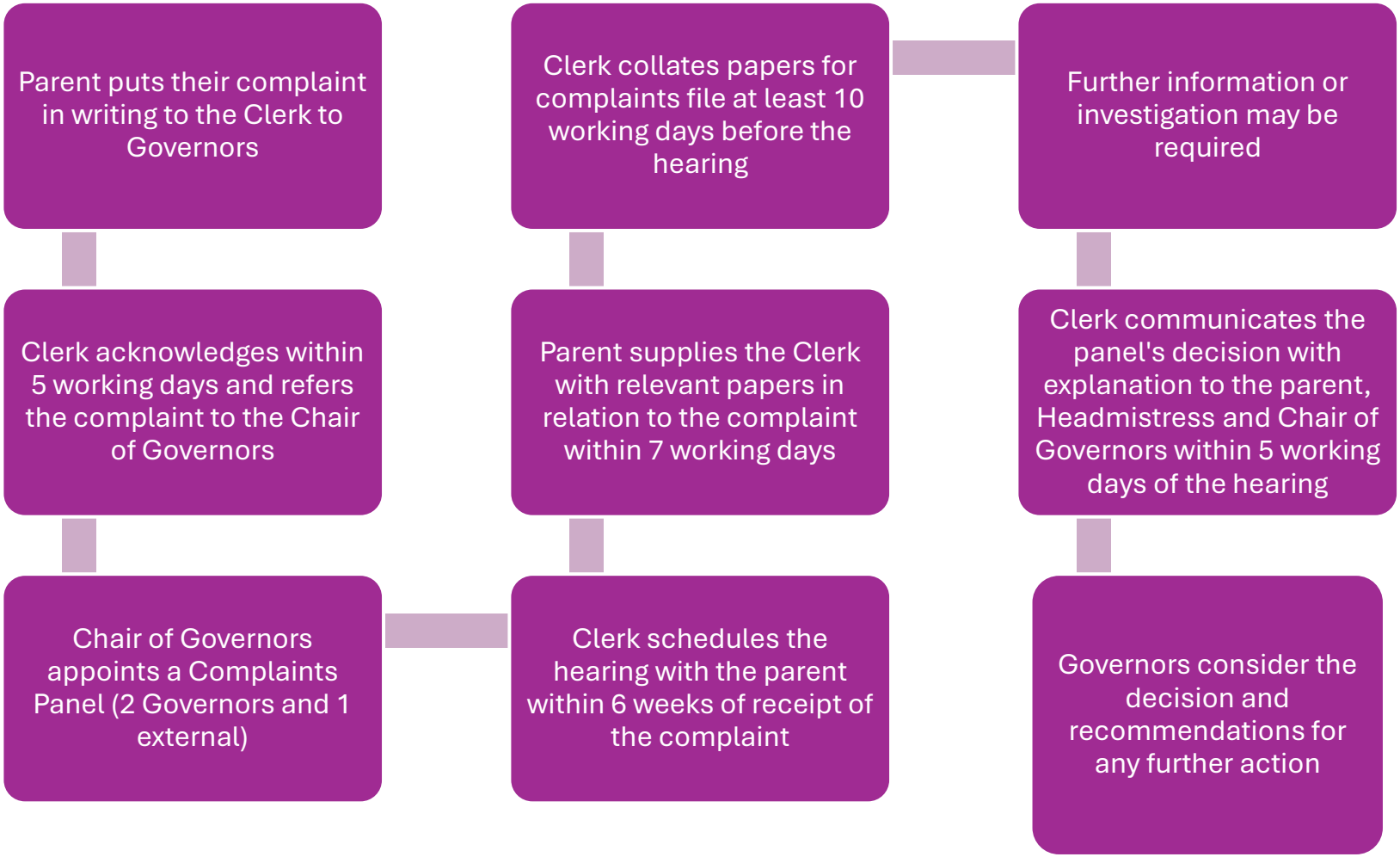


A parent/carer has a complaint that has not been resolved informally

Stage 2: Formal resolution



A parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 process
Stage 3: Appeals Procedure



Summary of changes:

Section	**Change**	**Reason for Change**
Stage 2 and Stage 3 contact details, pp. 5, 6 & 13	Replace **bursar@mayfieldgirls.org** with **abunce@mayfieldgirls.org**	The Senior Deputy Head is taking over the Clerk to the Governors role
Section 12 – Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data, p. 9	Clarifies that complaints at Stages 1, 2 and 3 will be recorded in a confidential central written record.	To clarify central and confidential record-keeping.
Section 12 – Complaint outcomes and actions, p. 9	Adds that records will note the stage resolved, any Stage 3 escalation, and any action taken.	To show how complaints are tracked and resolved.
Section 12 – Confidentiality and disclosure, p. 9	Expands when records may be disclosed, including to the Secretary of State, inspecting bodies, or where legally required.	To clarify when records may be disclosed.
Section 12 – Privacy Notice and complaints data, p. 9	Adds reference to the School's Privacy Notice and the types of complaints data processed.	To align with data protection obligations.