



Parental Complaints Procedure A Whole School Policy including EYFS

TPS aspires for each child to thrive personally, socially and academically by creating an inclusive environment that promotes wellbeing, encourages curiosity and celebrates individual success.

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1. Introduction

Twickenham Preparatory School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

The School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils including prospective pupils, on the school's website and in the school office during the school day. The School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it, are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Twickenham Preparatory School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under Clause 7.11 and 7.13 of the School's Terms and Conditions of Contract in which case such a review must be requested within seven days of the Head's decision being notified to the parents.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

2. 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 believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to 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. There may also

be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

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.

3. The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

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 initially contact their son/daughter's Form Tutor or Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the Form Tutor or Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult the relevant Head of Department, Head of Pre-Prep, Deputy Head or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Pre-Prep, Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Class Teacher unless the Head of Pre-Prep, Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The staff 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 a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding five working days) or in the event that the relevant staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution; then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

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. The Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet/speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter, within five working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Head (or their nominee) 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 their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within twenty working days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Head of Operations within seven 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.
- To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Head of Operations in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.
- The Head of Operations, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal 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 the day to day running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint within five working days and schedule a hearing to take place within twenty 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parent/s may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to 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

and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
 - Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part
 - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part
 - Make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within five 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 Stage 2 decision-taker and the Chair of Governors. 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.
- Any complaint about a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Stage 2 decision-taker to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

4. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

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

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. EYFS complaints are always dealt with according to the time-frames stated, irrespective of school holiday periods.

5. Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

6. Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) 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 on the School's website and on request from the School Office). 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
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes and minutes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision.

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and/or Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing 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. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and Data Retention & Storage Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector, there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g. in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

7. Pupil Complaints

For information regarding the management of complaints from pupils:

See Appendix 1

8. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Twickenham Preparatory School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints 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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Retention & Storage Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted and/or ISI if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Telephone 020 7600 0100

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Email: concerns@isi.net

Appendix 1: Pupils' Complaints

The principles which apply to parental complaints should also be applied to complaints and concerns from pupils.

There are, however, differences in approach. One important difference from the handling of parental complaints is that pupils should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, whether it be the form teacher, a member of the support staff, the Head of House or the Deputy Head.

In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, the outcome should be discussed with the pupil by a member of staff. To make sure that is fully understood, a written record may be shared.

The school has a Pupil Council at which pupil representatives can raise complaints. At Council meetings, issues can be aired and discussed with members of staff. A suggestion box is readily available for pupils before such meetings so that they can raise areas of concern.

Complaints which appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, such as bullying.

If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a pupil may need support from another pupil or from an adult.

Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, also need to be explained to pupils. Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education (PSHE) programmes can be of use not only in teaching pupils how they may support and act as mentors to others, but also in encouraging them to understand that their views matter.