



## Stormont School

# 33 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Policy Type	Statutory
Regulation	Section 1, Part 7, Paragraph 33
Approval Committee	Board of Governors
Last Review	Autumn 2023
Next Review	Autumn 2024

The policy will be published on the website for current and prospective parents, governors, staff and volunteers.

Hard copies are available from the School Office.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

This document is designed to show you how to use our complaints procedure which is appropriate for the use of parents with children in Reception (EYFS) to Year 6.

This policy is reviewed, authorised and approved annually by the Headteacher and Bursar on behalf of the Board of Governors and updated as needed on an interim basis by the Bursar.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stormont 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 in accordance with this procedure.

Whilst the policy is available to the parents of current pupils, the policy may, solely at the School's discretion, also be applicable to the parents of pupils who have left the School where the complaint has been received prior to the pupil leaving the School. This policy is also available, at Stage 3 only, under circumstances where parents may wish to appeal against a decision to permanently exclude a pupil from the School. This policy is not available to the parents of prospective pupils or pupils who have, at the time, not yet joined the School.

No complaint may be brought under the Policy in relation to the non-payment of any sum(s) owing to the school. If a parent has a complaint regarding any action taken (or proposed to be taken) by the School as a result of his/her failure to pay any sum(s) owing to the School the parent may write to the Clerk to the Governors at the School who will refer the matter to the Chair of the Governors. Similarly, if a parent wishes to make a complaint, their attention will be drawn to the School's standard Terms & Conditions under which a place is accepted; the making of a complaint does not remove the obligation to settle fees due and payable under these terms and conditions.

### **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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent 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 raise in good faith.

### **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 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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

### **RECORDING COMPLAINTS**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and at which stage they may be resolved and any action taken as a result of the complaint. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required under paragraph 33(k) of Part 7, Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

### **RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS**

- School Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Policy (Incorporating policies on Rewards & Sanctions)
- Exclusions and Appeals Policy
- School Terms and Conditions as updated
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Amendment) Regulations 2015

We wish to ensure that:-

- parents making a complaint know how to do so
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- we take appropriate action in response

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **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 daughter's Form Teacher or the Subject Teacher concerned. In most cases, it is hoped that the matter will be resolved informally and straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher or the Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a more senior member of staff, for example, the Head of Pre-Prep, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Pre-Prep School, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher or the Subject Teacher unless the Head of Pre-Prep School, the Deputy Head or the Headteacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

- The Form Teacher or the Subject Teacher 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 5 working days or the reasons for non-resolution not be understood by the parents then the parents will be advised that they can proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### **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 Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 3 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 Headteacher to carry out further investigations taking up to, but no more than, 5 working days to do so.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and whether the complaint is resolved following a formal procedure or proceeds to a panel hearing. The Headteacher will also keep records of any action taken by the school as a result of any complaint, regardless of whether it is upheld.
- 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 their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **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 Bursar, who has been appointed by the Board of 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 will be appointed by the Chairman of the Board of Governors. The Bursar, 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 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 3 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which will be completed within 3 days of the Hearing. The panel will write to or email parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be sent in writing or by email to the parents, the Headteacher, the Board of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of these findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Headteacher.

- A written record is kept, for at least three years, of all complaints. This includes written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and whether the complaint is resolved informally, or follows a formal procedure, or proceeds to a panel hearing. The school will keep records of any action taken by the school as a result of any complaint, regardless of whether it is upheld.

The same procedure detailed in Stage 3 above will also form the appeals process for parents wishing to appeal against an exclusion decision taken by the School. For further details see the School's Behaviour Management Policy and Exclusions and Appeals Policy which are available on the School's website or on request from the School Office.

### **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.

### **COMPLAINTS IN PAST YEARS**

There were no complaints investigated and resolved under Stage 3 and two under Stage 2 of this policy in the school year 2022/23.

### **EYFS – Reception**

For parents of children in Reception (EYFS) an official complaint may also be made to Ofsted and / or ISI (contact details given below)

#### **OFSTED**

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

General Helpline: 0300 123 1231

Textphone number: 0161 618 8524

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

#### **ISI (Independent Schools' Inspectorate)**

Ground Floor, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 0207 600 0100

[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)

<https://www.isi.net/parents-and-pupils/concerns-about-a-school>

and the following also applies:

- if there is a complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, it will be dealt with within 28 days of the written complaint being received
- any complaints pertaining to the fulfilment of the EYFS must be available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

All parents 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.