



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Policy Custodian: *Head Master*

Approving Governors Committee: *Full Governing Body*

Approved: *March 2018*

Next Review: *March 2019*

Introduction

The 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 in accordance with this Procedure. This policy applies only to parents of current pupils at the school.

The School will keep written records of complaints and the actions taken by the school, whether the complaint was upheld or not. The School confirms that it will maintain confidentiality with regard to all correspondence, statements and records. In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Merchant Taylors' School is pleased to 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.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a concern or a complaint they should normally contact their son's Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway, to the parents' satisfaction, by this means. If the Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult with a more senior teacher.
- Complaints made directly to members of staff will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor unless the senior teacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- Members of staff will (as appropriate) keep records of concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If the concern or complaint is made directly to the Head Master, a written record will be made. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days during term time, or, in the case of complaints made during a holiday, within fourteen days from the start of term following the holidays at Christmas, Easter, Summer or the October half term, then parents will be advised to 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, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head Master who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head Master will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 14 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 Master to carry out further investigations.

- The Head Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he will make a decision within seven days thereafter and will inform the parents forthwith in writing of his decision (and the reasons for same).
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- If the Head Master is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chairman of Governors and miss out Stage 1. The Chairman of Governors asks for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).
- All complaints which reach the formal stage of the proceedings will be recorded.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must set out their complaint in writing and send the same to the Clerk to the Governors (or an alternative convenor appointed by the Governors) within 14 days of receipt of the Head Master's decision. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 7 days of its receipt and will arrange for a hearing to take place before 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 Chairman of Governors. The hearing before the Complaints Panel will take place as soon as practicable (if possible, within a period of 28 days of the Clerk to the Governors acknowledging the complaint) at a place and at a time to be notified in writing by the Clerk to the Governors to the parents and to the other relevant parties.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to it in writing in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all relevant 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 permitted). The parents will be permitted to address the Panel. The person accompanying the parents will be entitled to address the Panel and to confer with the parents during the hearing (but will not be permitted to answer questions on behalf of the parents). The Panel will determine entirely at its discretion how the hearing will be conducted and who may be called as witnesses. The parents will be given reasonable opportunity to ask questions of such witnesses and, in turn, the Panel may ask its own questions of such witnesses, including the parents themselves.
- 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 and the timescale involved.
- After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant (including the results of any such further investigations), the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Panel's decision and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing (or via e-mail) to the parents, the Head Master, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of within 7 days of the decision being made. The Panel's decision shall be final and binding.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School in the course of the School's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Clerk to the Governors
March 2018

Review Date March 2019

Academic Year 2016/2017

Number of formal complaints (resolved at stage 2 or beyond in the policy): 2