



Whole School Policy

Complaints Policy & Procedure including EYFS

Action	Policy to be reviewed annually		
	Committee	Date	Completed
Reviewed	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	30 June 2023	✓
Reported	Audit Risk & Compliance Committee	November 2023	
Approved	Board of Governors	December 2023	
Next review	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	June 2024	

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. While pupils may, themselves, raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the School will involve parents should this occur.

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils and parents of pupils at the School including EYFS. It will be relied upon in respect of all complaints by parents and pupils made against the School except in respect of: (a) child protection allegations, where a separate policy and procedure applies (see Safeguarding and Child Protection policy) and (b) expulsions, where a separate policy and procedure applies (see Expulsion, Removal and Review policy). Attention is drawn to this policy as part of the registration process. Both policies are available on the School website.

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 something that it should have done or acted unfairly. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. The policy does not apply to prospective pupils.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and within twenty working days during the school holidays.

	Meeting Type	Resolution, Term	Resolution, Holiday Time
Stage 1	Informal	5 Days	38 Days
Stage 2	Formal	28 Days	38 Days
Stage 3	Panel Hearing	28 Days	38 Days

EYFS – any complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated within 28 days from having received the complaint.

Recording Complaints

Following the resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, what action, if any was taken by the School, which stage they were resolved at or if they proceeded to a Panel Hearing. These records will provide the Chair of Governors the management information so that patterns of concern can be monitored and the quality of leadership and management assessed. 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 the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of staff handling the case at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Outcomes / Findings of investigations or hearings

All information 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 to see them.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- (i) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- (ii) If a parent has a complaint about a financial matter, it should be brought to the attention of the Bursar.
- (iii) At the Pre-Prep and Prep School, if a parent has a complaint about an academic or pastoral matter it should be brought to the attention of Prep school Class Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent, depending on the School and the nature of the complaint. It may be necessary for him/her to investigate the matter by consulting a particular teacher or to refer the matter to the Head of Department or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- (iv) At the Senior School, if a parent has a complaint about an academic or pastoral matter it should be brought to the attention of a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- (v) Any complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership across all parts of Gresham's School will usually be referred to the relevant teacher, Head of Department, or Housemaster/Housemistress; or the Head of each part of the School (Pre-Prep, Prep or Senior) may deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- (vi) The member of staff dealing with the informal complaint should make written records of all concerns and complaints logged on CPOMS, and the date on which they were received, and action taken by the School as a result of those concerns and complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the relevant member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

(vii) If the complaint is against the Headmaster, Head of Prep or Head of Pre-Prep then parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, in writing. The letter should be sent to Mr Michael Goff c/o Gresham's School, Cromer Road, Holt, NR25 6EA

(i) **Additional Information for Early Years Foundation Stage ("EYFS") at Gresham's Pre-Prep School**

- With reference to complaints brought by parents of pupils receiving education under EYFS, the following provisions apply in addition to those detailed above:
- the formal record of all complaints and the outcome (regardless of severity) is kept for a minimum of three years;
- written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days; and
- the record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted
- should parents not be completely satisfied with the handling of the complaint by the School under its formal complaints procedure or if they believe we are not meeting the EYFS requirements, they may make a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate at Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA or 020 7600 0100 or email: concerns@isi.net or via their website www.isi.net or to OFSTED at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or via their website www.ofsted.gov.uk/parents or 0300 123 1231 or email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
- Where parents/carers are not satisfied that their child is receiving the free entitlement in the correct way (as set out in the School's funding agreement and in Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities), a complaint can be submitted directly to the Bursar.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint & Resolution

- (i) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should **put their complaint in writing** to the Headmaster (Senior School) or Head of Prep (Prep School) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) stating that they are invoking Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. The Headmaster or Head of Prep or Head of Pre-Prep will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 24 hours. He /She will then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. They may nominate another member of the Senior Leadership team to carry out the investigation
- (ii) The Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) will confer with the parents concerned, normally **within five working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the complaint is made in the holidays or very close to the end of term the Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) will confer with the parents within 38 working days.
- (iii) It may be necessary for the Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) to carry out further investigations, which will be delayed to the beginning of the next term if the complaint is made in the holidays or very close to the end of term.

- (iv) Once the Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) 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. He / She will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- (v) **Written records will be kept** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, whether or not they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to Stage 3. This record will include any action and will be available for inspection by Governors.
- (vi) Normally the decision will be made within 28 working days of the receipt of the written complaint. **If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this Procedure

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- (i) If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should put in writing to the Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) that they are invoking Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure. He or She will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 Complaint within 24 hours.
- (ii) **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 Governors of Gresham's School. The person chairing the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within five working days. This may be delayed to the beginning of the next term if the complaint is made in the holidays or very close to the end of term.
- (iii) 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 two working days prior to the hearing.
- (iv) The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate.
- (v) 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 it shall complete within three working days of the Hearing. Once the Appeal Panel has made a decision it should inform all parties involved within 10 working days. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. These will be made available for inspection on the School premises by Governors and the Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep).

This will include any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint whether or not it is upheld.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. A written record of all complaints made and action taken as a result of the complaint registered under the formal procedure in line with the Independent School Standards Regulations is held by the School. There was 1 formal complaint registered under the Stage 3 procedure during the 2022/2023 academic year.

If your worry or complaint concerns the welfare of pupils you may wish to contact: ISI at info@isi.net or Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, Tel: 020 7600 0100.

You may also contact the Local Authority Designated Officer, Grace Cheese, on 01603 223473 or LADO@norfolk.gov.uk

Douglas Robb (Headmaster), Cathy Braithwaite (Head of Prep), Sarah Hollingsworth (Head of Pre-Prep & EYFS)

Persistent and unreasonable complaints (see Appendix 1)

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

Monitoring of complaints

The Senior Leadership Team of the Senior, Prep and Pre-prep should be kept aware of by the Heads of each school, Bursar and/or Deputy Head (Pastoral) of trends in complaints at any stage.

Details will also be shared with governors, on conclusion of each complaint, so that they can maintain a monitoring oversight and intervene should they consider it necessary.

Appendix 1 -

Gresham's is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Gresham's defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our 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 complaints 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 taken into account 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 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 on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Gresham's causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Gresham's.