



## Whole School Policy

### Complaints Policy and Procedure including EYFS

Action	Policy to be reviewed annually		
	Committee	Date	Completed
Reviewed	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	June 2024	✓
Reported	Audit Risk & Compliance Committee	25 November 2024	✓
Approved	Board of Governors	2 December 2024	✓
Next review	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	June 2025	

## 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 with care and in accordance with this Procedure. While pupils may, themselves, raise concerns and complaints under this procedure, the School will involve parents should this occur.

Gresham's School makes parents aware of its Complaints Procedure during the Registration process, and the procedure is available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. The School will ensure that parents who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Gresham's School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or 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.

For the avoidance of doubt, 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, including EYFS. *[It may also be used by pupils who are current boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision].* 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. 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).

## 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, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

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 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.

## **The Three-stage Complaints Procedure**

### **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 Schools, if a parent has a complaint about an academic or pastoral matter it should be brought to the attention of Prep or Pre-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, 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 **7 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 (Senior School), Head of Prep School or Head of Pre-Prep School, then parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, in writing, via the Clerk to the Governors c/o Gresham's School, Cromer Road, Holt, NR25 6EA, or [clerk@greshams.com](mailto:clerk@greshams.com).

### **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, using the form [Form for Stage 2 Complaint](#)**, addressed to the Headmaster (Senior School) or Head of Prep (Prep School) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep School) stating that they are invoking Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. The Headmaster, Head of Prep or Head of Pre-Prep will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, normally within **3 working days**.

- (ii) The Headmaster (Senior) or Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) will confer with the parents concerned, normally **within 7 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- (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. They may nominate another member of the Senior Leadership Team to carry out the investigation, 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 21 working days** of the receipt of the written complaint.
- (vii) If the complaint is against the Headmaster (Senior School), Head of Prep (Prep School) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep School), and the complaint should be made directly to the Chair of Governors (as for Stage 1). 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 Headmaster (Senior School), Head of Prep or Head of Pre-Prep (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headmaster/Head. The person nominated by the Chair of Governors will (if necessary) investigate and will normally respond to parents in writing within **21 working days** of receiving the complaint with a decision and the reasons for that decision.
- (viii) **If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- (i) Parents must only apply for a Panel Hearing (Stage 3) following a failure to reach a resolution under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. Requests to invoke Stage 3 **should be made in writing by parents using the form [Form for Stage 3 Complaint](#)** and must outline the nature of their complaint, why they remain dissatisfied and the resolution they are seeking. The letter should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors, Gresham's School, Cromer Road, Holt, NR25 6EA, and should be sent within 7 working days of the date a written Stage 2 decision was received from the Headmaster (Senior School), Head of Prep (Prep School), Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep) or Chair of Governor's nominated person if the complaint has been about the Headmaster/Head. The Clerk to the Governors will normally acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 letter within **3 working days**.

- (ii) 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 Clerk to the Governors 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.
- (iii) **The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearing of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal 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. The Complaints Panel will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The person chairing the Panel will acknowledge the complaint within **7 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, and normally within **21 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.
- (iv) 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 **5 working days** prior to the hearing.
- (v) **The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish.** This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- (vi) 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.
- (i) 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.
- (vii) After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will reach a decision as to whether 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; and
  - make recommendations.
- (viii) The Panel Chair will write to the parents informing them of the Panel's decision and the reasons for it, **within 7 working days** of the Panel 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 Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. These will be made available for inspection on the School premises by Governors and the Headmaster (Senior), Head of Prep (Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep (Pre-Prep).

### **Timeframe for dealing with complaints**

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

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 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, if invoked, will be completed as far as reasonably practical within a further 28 working days.

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.

### **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.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following the resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage), 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), of leadership and management assessed.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice (available here: [Policies and Inspection Reports](#)). 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 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)
- Notes/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 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 Privacy Notice.

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 and Record Retention Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), 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 (for example, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.**

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

Parents of EYFS pupils 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.

Gresham's 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 Record Retention Policy.

**Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:**

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

If your worry or complaint concerns the welfare of pupils you may also contact:

The Local Authority Designated Officer, Grace Cheese, on 01603 223473.