

This policy was reviewed in: **August 2023**

This policy is due to be reviewed in: **June 2024**

**This policy applies to the whole School including EYFS**

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## Introduction

Pipers Corner School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. 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. Pipers Corner makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of students on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day. Pipers Corner will ensure that parents of students who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. The School will ensure that this procedure is followed for complaints by parents of students but the School is not required to follow this procedure for complaints by prospective parents or parents of past students (unless the complaint was initially raised when the student was still registered at the School).

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (known as the ISSRs) (as subsequently amended), Pipers Corner will make available to parents of students and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Under EYFS regulations in the event of a complaint or a concern we follow the written procedure. This includes keeping a written record of any complaints and their outcome. In fulfilment of the EYFS requirements we investigate all written complaints and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation normally within 28 working days of receiving the complaint, if this is received during term time. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

## 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.

Parents can be assured that all 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 or your child 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 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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

## Recording complaints

The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the formal resolution stage or proceed to a panel hearing, and the School will also keep a written record of any action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- The date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of student
- 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 by Schedule 1 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

The record of complaints in EYFS must be made available to Ofsted on request.

The information in respect of complaints which are not connected to safeguarding will be retained until the student to whom the complaint relates, reaches the age of 25.

The information in respect of complaints relating to any safeguarding issues must be kept safely by the School for a longer timeframe. The School currently awaits further guidance in this respect from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the U.K. data protection regulator. Pending receipt of this further advice, the School will continue to retain this information securely in its archive.

The School also keeps a record of informal complaints logged via CPOMS in order to monitor or identify trends and address issues early where appropriate. These records are deleted in accordance with the School's Policy on 'Information and Records Retention'.

## Stages of resolution

### Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Head of Year or the Head of Department. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff approached cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him or her to consult the Deputy Heads or one of the Assistant Heads.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Heads, one of the Assistant Heads or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Head of Year or Head of Department, unless the Deputy Head/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Head of Year or Head of Department will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working term-time days or in the event that the Head of Year or Head of Department and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised in writing to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

### 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 will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will appoint a senior member of staff to meet the parents concerned, during term-time this would normally be within 7 days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage although it may be necessary to carry out further investigations. During a school holiday this period would normally be within a period of 7 working days.

- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the member of staff investigating the complaint will report their findings to the Head who will decide on the outcome of the complaint and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to, or meet with, the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within 14 working days of being informed in writing of the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint.

### **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 Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the 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 three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be an independent member, i.e. someone who is not involved in the management and running of the School. The Clerk to the Governors on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents will normally attend the hearing and may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal or other formal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The person accompanying the parent(s) is present to provide personal support; they are not entitled to address the Panel or to speak on behalf of the parent(s).

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint following the hearing and 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 make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 working days of 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 Head.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after completion of all three stages, this is regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

If Governors are involved in more than one stage of the complaints process the School will ensure the independence of each stage.

### **Contact details for Ofsted and ISI are as follows:**

- ISI  
Cap House, 9 -12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA  
Email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
Telephone: 020 7600 0100
- Ofsted  
Email: [enquires@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquires@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0300 1234 666

## **Complaints received**

During the Academic Year 2022/23 the School received two formal complaints.