



ST MARGARET'S PREP CALNE

Complaints Policy & Procedure

This policy provides information and procedures for:

1. Parents
2. Pupils – please refer to 'Any problems, complaints or suggestions'

A. INTRODUCTION

An Open Organisation:

St. Margaret's Preparatory School is committed to ensuring that complaints will be treated seriously and that there are no impediments to anyone with a legitimate interest making representations or complaints. The school seeks to deal with all representations and complaints within defined time scales and to respond in as full a way as possible.

This policy is available on the school website or as hard copy through the school office.

What constitutes a representation or complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a parent with a real or perceived problem.

At all times, the aim will be to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and at the right level. Representations which have not reached a formal complaints stage will similarly be treated seriously and responded to within defined time limits.

A representation or complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have done
- acted unfairly or impolitely

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department within the school or about an individual member of staff. In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will usually be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.

In the event of a panel hearing, the teacher will usually have the right to make representations to the panel unless the complaint is linked to a safeguarding or child protection matter.

B. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All representations and complaints will be handled seriously. Procedures will be applied with the aim of enabling individuals to raise any concerns and to allow a full and open evaluation of all the relevant issues. Complaints against staff will generally be dealt with by the Head. Matters relating to the Head will be referred to the Chairman of Governors.

Head: office@stmargetsprep.org.uk or 01249 857220

Chair of Governors (via Clerk to Governors): dboswell@stmaryscalne.org

C. RECORDING OF COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be recorded as follows:

- date when the issue was raised
- name of parent
- name of pupil
- statement of issue(s)
- staff member handling the issue(s)
- statement of outcome and resolution

Confidential notes on all representations and complaints will be maintained and kept together in the school office. As far as possible the nature of the concern will be agreed with the complainant and recorded. This is to ensure all the facts are known and investigations into concerns are correctly focused on the agreed issues.

The complaints process follows the following stages:

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 contact their child's class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Pre-Prep or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as appropriate.

Complaints made directly to the Head of Pre-Prep or a member of the SLT will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the 'line manager' will attempt to resolve the matter in **five days**.

The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints and concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within **five days**, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, 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, then the parents will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the Head, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate and next action to take.

In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned within **forty-eight hours** 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 to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in **seven days**.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will give full reasons for the decision.

The written decision will be issued within **fourteen days** of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headmistress will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why she is unable to issue her decision and informing the parents when she will do so, which will be within **twenty-eight days** of receipt of the complaint in any event. All complainants raising concerns relating to EYFS will be informed of the outcome within 28 days of making the complaint.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing:

Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Head informing him of their decision to do so within 28 days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the chairman of governors.

The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. And will include:

- the Convenor;
- a senior staff member;

- and a person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

Panel members will be committed to keeping the proceedings of the Panel confidential. If a complaint is made about the management of St Margaret's, it would not be appropriate for governors to sit on the panel; all appointed members should be independent of the management and running of the school. The complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place within **fourteen days**.

If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than **five days** before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.

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 parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation.

However, should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within **fourteen days** of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.

Copies of the panel's findings and, if any, recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair and the Head.

Where the complaint relates to an individual, a copy of the panel's findings and, if any, recommendations are available to that individual.

A written record of all complaints will be kept, detailing the action taken by the school, and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by Part 7 – 33. (k) of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where the secretary of state or a body conducting inspection under

section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The School will provide 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.

Complaints relating to children in either the Early Years Foundation Stage (Kindergarten and Reception Classes) or Key stages 1 & 2 may be directed to:

Independent Schools Inspectorate CAP House 9-12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA **Telephone 020 7600 0100**

Complaints relating to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage may be directed to:

Ofsted Picadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Telephone 0300 123 1231

Any complaint made in respect of the EYFS will be kept for at least three years.

Person Responsible for the Complaints Procedure Policy: The Head

There were 0 complaints registered under the formal procedure during 2018/19.

This policy considers at its heart, children's rights as exemplified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Specifically:

- Article 18 – Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by giving them the help they need, especially if the parents work.
- Article 19 – Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Approved by Governors

November 2019

Date of next policy review

September 2020