

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

This procedure refers to parents of current pupils along with past pupils, if a complaint was raised when the pupil was still registered but does not cover exclusions

This Procedure, (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the School website www.pattisons.co.uk and on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office. A copy is also provided in the information for prospective parents and guardians, on enquiry for admission.

Legal Status: This procedure incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be managed in accordance with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force.

Timescale: The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty-eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.

Monitoring and Review:

The Principal (who is also the Proprietor) monitors the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly and also undertake, a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged.

Signed:

Reviewed: August 2018

Will next be reviewed: August 2019

Mrs Elizabeth McConnell
Principal and Proprietor

Introduction: Pattison College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, guardians and pupils and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. Our reputation is important and it is in the interest of the school to deal with any concerns promptly. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated seriously by the School in accordance with this Procedure. We resolve complaints to the parent's satisfaction, or with an appropriate outcome, which balances the rights and duties of pupils who are not penalised for making a complaint. We are open about our decisions and actions, explaining our rationale. The Principal logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents and pupils wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way and
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously, taking action where appropriate.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. We handle each complaint fairly, confidentially, using the agreed time frame. Throughout the process we listen,

learn, admit mistakes, address issues raised, apologise and change practices and procedures, if appropriate. At all stages in the complaints process a written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then be informed in writing.

“How should I complain?”

Informal Resolution *(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Pupils should raise all complaints with their form teacher in the first instance. In the case of parents, any member of staff will be happy to help but it may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. They will keep a dated record. You can also write a letter or telephone.

“What will happen next?”

If you raise something face to face or by telephone it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you have made a complaint in writing or via e-mail, we will respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed. In addition, a copy of your letter or your e-mail will be placed in the confidential Comments and Complaints file. This is to ensure we follow up any actions.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given an indication of when you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible and usually within seven (7) school days. This will tell you the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.

“What happens about confidentiality?”

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved, except in the circumstances required by law or school inspection. It is the school’s policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the Police. You would be informed. While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued. However, serious complaints such as those raising allegations will be followed up. Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered. Should the matter not be resolved to your satisfaction within seven (7) school days, then parents are to advance to the formal complaints stage of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: *(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

If parents seek to invoke Stage 2 (following a failure to reach resolution at the Informal Stage), they should write or email in the first instance to the Principal. The Principal will either meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within three (3) school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The Principal will establish what has happened so far and who has been involved; clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved and what the parents feels would resolve the issue. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations. Written records will be kept by the

Principal of all meetings and interviews with regard to the complaint. Once all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the Principal and parents will be informed of this decision in writing or by email within fourteen (14) days. The reasons for the decision will also be given.

Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Principal, an approach should first be made to the Chair of the Advisory Board whose contact details are: Mr Matthew Adshead Chairman of the Advisory Board on telephone: 013325 377830, Old Vicarage School, 11 Church Lane, Darley Abbey, Derby, Derbyshire, DE22 1EW. Email: office@oldvicarageschool.co.uk

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach resolution at the Formal Stage), they will be referred to the Convenor, Mr Chris Jones, is appointed by the Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel will consist of three (3) people who are not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel members are appointed by the Proprietor, who will normally be a member of the panel. The Panel Convenor will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days of the parents seeking to invoke Stage 3.

You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. 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 days prior to the hearing. You will be invited to bring a friend with you but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. If 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 findings and recommendations, within 5 working days of the Panel meeting. The Panel will write or email, informing you of its decision and the reasons for it. Also, the Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the Proprietor, the Advisory Board and, where relevant, the person complained of, making this available for inspections.

Summary of Time Scales

During School Time:

- *Stage 1 Informal resolution:*
Resolved in seven (7) days or progress to Stage 2
- *Stage 2 Formal resolution:* Response to parents within three (3) days for meeting to resolve. If still unresolved or a further investigation needed, a letter from the Principal will be received by the parents within fourteen (14) days of the initial meeting.
- *Stage 3 Panel Hearing:* Complaint sent to the Complaints Panel within seven (7) days. The date of the hearing is to be set normally no later than twenty one (21) days of receipt of the complaint. Copies of the particulars of the complaint are supplied to all parties not later than five (5) days prior to the hearing. If possible the parent's complaint will be resolved immediately. If further investigation is required, a decision will be sent within five (5) days of the hearing.

During Holiday Periods: The complaint will normally be resolved within twenty-eight (28) days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case the parents will be kept informed. However, as far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term,

especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the parents will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

Confidentiality: Parents and Guardians can be assured that 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; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Record keeping for the Whole School: A written record is kept by the Proprietor (who is also the Principal) of all complaints whether they are resolved at the informal stage or following a formal procedure, or proceeding to a panel hearing, for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least:

- date when the issue was raised; name of parent, name of pupil, 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;
- any action taken and the outcome of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld);
- written record of when a final outcome was reached and
- copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversation).

Additionally, the Proprietor examines this written record on an annual basis, providing, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Principal (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Parents of Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are also entitled to make a complaint to Ofsted (The regulatory authority) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) (The inspecting authority) about the provision. The contact details for both organisations are:

- **Ofsted**, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.
Telephone: 0301231231 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- **Independent Schools inspectorate**, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA,
- Telephone: 02076 000100 or to concerns@isi.net.

The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except to the extent required by the *Education (Independent School Standards England) Regulations* currently in force, by the Secretary of State for Education, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under any other legal obligation that prevails.

The number of formal complaints registered in the past academic year is zero. There were 2 informal complaints both of which were resolved without the need for a formal procedure.