



# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Last reviewed:	<b>September 2024</b>
Next review date:	<b>September 2025</b>
Responsibility:	<b>Head</b>
Governance:	<b>Education Committee</b>

## Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or pupils do have a complaint (other than in relation to a disciplinary matter which is the subject matter of a separate procedure), they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

N.B. This procedure does not apply to any complaints pertaining to school exclusions.

## What constitutes a complaint

For the purposes of this Policy, a complaint by a parent(s) or pupil(s) will either be; (i) An issue raised by a parent or pupil which they explicitly state that they wish to be treated as a complaint, or; (ii) An issue raised by a parent or pupil which is escalated to a member of the Senior Leadership Team because it has not been able to be resolved by other members of staff. In these circumstances, this will be recorded as a complaint, even if the parent has not explicitly requested it.

A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department in the School or about an individual member of staff.

When a complaint concerns only the matter of finance such as fees in lieu which remain outstanding, the matter of the fees owed alone falls outside the scope of this procedure. The Head/Bursar of the school remains responsible for all financial decisions.

## Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. Parents can be reassured that we listen to them and take them seriously.

If you are in any doubt about whether a complaint should be passed on, please do contact your child's Form Tutor, Class Teacher, Head of Year, relevant Boarding staff or the Bursar in the first instance to discuss the matter.

## Recording Complaints

A written record of all concerns and complaints that cannot be resolved informally will be made and, where applicable, may include the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of Parent
- Name of Pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Location of file (if applicable)
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome

The written record will record action taken by the School regardless of whether a complaint is upheld.

## Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- All members of staff are encouraged to deal with a parental or pupil concern that lies within their area of responsibility. However, if parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's subject teacher, form teacher, tutor or (if appropriate) boarding Housemaster/mistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult either a Head of Department, Head of Year or one of the Deputy Heads.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, one of the Senior Leadership Team or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher, subject teacher, class teacher, Housemaster / Housemistress unless that person deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The form teacher, tutor, subject teacher or boarding Housemaster/mistress will make a **written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received**. Should the matter not be resolved **within five working days** or in the event that the form teacher, teacher, tutor or boarding Housemaster/mistress 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.

\*'working days' shall mean working days during school term time.

## 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 or another senior member of staff will meet / speak to the parents or pupils concerned, normally **within 5 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. During the holiday period, complaints will be dealt with as swiftly as possible, but absence of staff may well lead to delays.
- If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out.
- **Written records** will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing. This will be within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint during term time and 15 working days during the holiday period. The Head will provide reasons for the decision.
- **If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this Procedure.

If a complaint is made during the holiday period, every effort will be made to adhere to the timescale above and parents will be kept fully informed if this is not possible due to the unavailability of staff.

Although all formal complaints must be made in writing to the Head, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing to the Head, which may include a handwritten or email complaint. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the informal stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage. If the Head is contacted directly by a parent with an initial complaint or concern, they may ask a Deputy Head to deal with the matter in the first instance in line with the informal Stage 1 process.

**Should the formal complaint relate to the Head, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors c/o the School's address.**

## 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 authorised by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. A panel hearing will take place unless the parent(s) later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the School's obligation to hold the hearing in line with this policy. The arrangements for the hearing will be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents' attendance.
- **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 not only outside the School's workforce and not a member of the governing body, but also not involved with the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors.** 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 15 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 not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing. At this stage, this will be a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a judicial review style check that process was followed.
- **The parents may be accompanied to the hearing.** This may be by relatives, teachers or friends. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. It must be noted that parents' right to request and attend a panel is not forfeit because they have threatened or initiated legal proceedings.
- 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 5 working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.** 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 Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.**

**Parents and pupils can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially by the proprietor and the Head. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 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. From September 2020, all complaints which do not have a safeguarding implication will be retained for a minimum period of 7 years. If the complaint has a safeguarding implication, documentation will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.**

The number of complaints received during an academic year will be notified to parents on an annual basis – see appendix A.

When 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 outside of the scope of this policy.

A complaint raised in relation to a child who has left the school will not fall under the scope of this procedure and will be dealt with in line with current guidelines or legislation depending on the nature of the complaint. The child is taken off roll on the final day of the term in which they leave. Parents are therefore advised to raise any issues with the school in a timely manner so that it can be addressed and resolved promptly.

Parents of children in EYFS have the right to complain directly to the Registration Authority (OFSTED) on 0300 123 1231 should they believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Furthermore, in the case of complaints from parents of children in EYFS, a written record of all complaints and their outcomes/action taken must be made available to the Registration Authority (Ofsted and ISI) on request.

A record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three years and any complaints relating to pupils in the EYFS will be held for at least three years. Being OFSTED registered, the school will notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint. The school will provide OFSTED/ISI with a written record of complaints and any action taken on

request. At any stage of the complaints procedure parents may communicate with, appeal or complain to OFSTED [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net).

Parents can make a complaint to ISI or Ofsted and contacts are below:

Independent Schools Inspectorate Ground Floor 9-12 Cap House Long Lane London EC1A 9HA

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Telephone 020 7600 0100 or 020 7710 9900

Dear Parents

I want to share important information about recent changes in the way independent schools are inspected. Although independent schools like ours are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) rather than Ofsted, the process has been updated to align more closely with the maintained sector's inspections.

One aspect of compliance is providing essential information to parents. We are required to give you:

- The school's address, phone number, and the Head's name
- The school's registered office's address and phone number
- The Chair of Governors' name and contact details
- A statement about our school's ethos and goals

Additionally, I'd like to make you aware of several important policies and documents available on our website:

- Acceptable ICT Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Curriculum Policy
- EAL Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Fire Policies & Procedures
- First Aid Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Statement of Ethos
- Terms and Conditions

These resources can be accessed in the Information Section on our school website. If you prefer hard copies, please let us know.

It is also a requirement of recent legislation that I inform parents annually that we have a clear and transparent procedure for dealing with any complaints and that the relevant policy document is available on the school's website or on request from the School Office. We hope, of course, that you will not have cause to complain; however, should you bring matters to our attention which are of concern to you we will endeavour to do all that we can to resolve things informally in accordance with the Procedure. If a resolution cannot be reached in this way, then there is a formal process to be followed as explained in the policy. I am also required to tell you how many complaints we have had to deal with in this more formal way during the last school year, and I can report that there was one formal complaint.

**Peter Watts**  
Head

**Plymouth College**  
Ford Park, Plymouth  
Devon, PL4 6RN  
T 01752 505100

mail@plymouthcollege.com  
www.plymouthcollege.com

Registered Charity No: 1105544  
Registered Company No:  
05189426

To comply with regulations and keep you informed, I'm writing to you annually, in line with ISI's recommendation. Your understanding and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Watts', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Peter Watts**  
**Head**

**Peter Watts**  
Head

**Plymouth College**  
Ford Park, Plymouth  
**Devon, PL4 6RN**  
**T 01752 505100**

[mail@plymouthcollege.com](mailto:mail@plymouthcollege.com)  
[www.plymouthcollege.com](http://www.plymouthcollege.com)

Registered Charity No: 1105544  
Registered Company No:  
05189426

## **INFORMATION**

### **School's Address & Telephone Number**

Plymouth College  
Ford Park  
Plymouth  
Devon PL4 6RN

**Telephone:** 01752 505100

**Head:** Mr P J Watts

### **Address & Telephone Number of Registered Office**

Plymouth College  
Ford Park  
Plymouth  
Devon PL4 6RN

**Telephone:** 01752 505100

### **Name & Address for Correspondence to the Chair of Governors**

The Chair of Governors  
c/o The Clerk to the Governors  
Plymouth College  
Ford Park  
Plymouth  
Devon PL4 6RN

**Chairman of Governors:** Mr A Palmer



## PLYMOUTH COLLEGE COMPLAINTS

Date	
Complaint From	
Nature of Complaint	
Action taken by	
Action Taken	
Signature	
Date	

***\*\*template\*\****

## INVESTIGATION INTO A FORMAL COMPLAINT

<p><i>Complete as appropriate:</i></p> <p><b>1. against : INSERT NAME (if applicable)</b>  <b>2. regarding: INSERT details</b></p>
<p><b>Date of Formal Complaint:</b></p>
<p><b>Name of Parent (&amp; pupil if applicable) making the Complaint:</b></p>
<p><b>Staff Member leading the investigation:</b></p>
<p><b><u>Process of the investigation</u></b>  <b>Source material</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statement from</li> <li>• A written report from</li> <li>• A further written report from</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Findings from Allegations in time order</u></b></p> <p><b>Allegation 1 –</b></p> <p><b>Finding –</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation -</b></p>
<p><b>Allegation 2</b></p> <p><b>Finding –</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation -</b></p>
<p><b><u>Formal Complaint Outcome &amp; School Decision</u></b></p>