

COMPLAINTS POLICY

<p>Policy Owner</p> <p>PPS Director of Operations and Finance</p>	<p>Applies to</p> <p>Prior Park Schools</p>	<p>Superseded documents</p> <p>PPS Complaints Policy Sept 2018</p>
<p>Associated documents</p> <p>Admissions Policy; Child Protection Policy (Part of Safeguarding); Counter Bullying Policy; Equal Opportunities Policy; Exclusions Policy; Retention and Destruction Policy</p>	<p>Review frequency</p> <p>Every year</p> <p>Implementation date</p> <p>1 December 2019</p>	<p>Legal Framework</p> <p>See policy</p>

Introduction

Prior Park Schools (PPS) comprises three schools. Two of those schools, Prior Park College and The Paragon School are incorporated in England as Prior Park Educational Trust Ltd. The third school, Prior Park School Gibraltar, is incorporated in Gibraltar as Prior Park School Ltd. Both are companies limited by guarantee and registered charities.

1. SCOPE

This policy is written in line with the following Legal framework, regulations and statutory guidance;

- A: The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 as amended by the Independent Education Provisions in England (Inspection Fees) and Independent School Standards (Amendments) 2018 (ISS Regulations)
- B: Boarding Schools: National Minimum Standards, April 2015
- C: ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools – Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements, September 2018 (ISI Handbook)
- D: The Early Years Foundation Stage: Statutory Framework, March 2017
- E: General Data Protection Regulations Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018

PPS will endeavour to resolve all complaints as quickly as is practical in the circumstances. References to working days in this policy means Monday to Friday during the published academic year and does not include school holidays when relevant staff may not be available to investigate any particular complaint.

PPS is proud of the quality of its teaching, pastoral and boarding care. Nonetheless, complaints from parents or students can and do arise from time to time. This policy is available to parents, students, boarders and visitors and explains how your complaint will be handled. It concerns all three schools within the Trust and includes the Early Years Foundation Stage. Any complaints should have a direct connection with the one of the three schools within PPS.

Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the student to which the complaint relates, was still registered as a student at one of the Schools at the time.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, PPS will make available to parents of students and of prospective students and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the School's Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Written procedures for members of staff to state a grievance are the subject of a separate policy; Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance's (procedures for addressing) Policy.

Exclusions are not covered by this Complaints process. The PPS Exclusions Policy provides details regarding exclusions appeals.

2. COMPLAINTS POLICY

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, including those referred to as 'concerns', are within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and 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] raises in good faith.

Stage 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

The guide below outlines the process involved if you wish to take the matter further.

It is hoped and expected that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

Complaints, whether written or verbal, should be made in the first instance to either:

- the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress, tutor, class/subject teacher or;
- on purely academic matters to the Deputy Head Academic (PPC)/Director of Studies (TPS)/the Deputy Head (PPSG) or;
- on administrative/financial issues to the Prior Park Schools Director of Operations and Finance.
- or more generally, the Prior Park Schools Compliance Lead

Complaints made directly to a more senior member of the teaching staff (i.e. Head or Deputy Head) will normally be referred back in the first instance to the level described above, unless there is a clear reason not to do so.

A member of staff receiving the complaint will always make a written record, including the date on which the complaint was received, and any action taken. The recipient should make every effort to resolve the complaint informally, seeking more senior guidance as necessary. Except in school holidays, complainants should expect to receive initial acknowledgement of their complaint within 48 hours.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level it will be passed to the, Deputy Head or Head (stage 2), and indeed any complaint not satisfactorily resolved within 5 working days must be referred in this way. If a complaint is so referred the complainant will be informed.

Stage 2 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved at stage 1, the complainant will be advised to pursue the complaint at stage 2 in writing.

At this stage the complaint should be put in writing and addressed to the Head. The formal complaints procedure is not automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing,

for example, by email. Complaints will only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage (as outlined in stage 1), and only then if the complainant purposefully intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage, with an official written complaint.

The Head or Deputy Head will meet the complainant (or email/telephone), normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter.

If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The Head (or Deputy) may be accompanied at meeting(s) by other member(s) of staff as appropriate to the case.

If applicable, complainants may be asked to realise that it is necessary for the school to carry out further investigations.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The record of a meeting may be taken by a separate note taker.

Once the Head is satisfied that so far as is practicable all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed of this decision, and the reasons. Any written complaint will normally receive a response by the same medium (i.e. letter, email, etc.).

The conclusion of Stage 2 should be within two working weeks of the complaint being raised to this level. If further investigations are still required at that time, then the complainant will be informed, with a forecast of the expected response date. It is likely that a complaint received just before or during a school holiday will take longer than two weeks to investigate given the availability of relevant staff.

If a complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily at the Head's level, then the issue may be referred to a panel convened by the Chair of Governors. The complainant will be informed of the right to refer the issue to the Board of Governors in writing and will also be offered a copy of the written procedure for pursuing this route.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days.

Stage 3 - PANEL HEARING

If this part of the procedure is invoked, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of Governors (or nominated Governor) who will call a complaints panel hearing. PPS takes complaints seriously and will strive to resolve any complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant as soon as possible and with an open and fair approach.

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 independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors and on behalf of the Panel, the Chair will then acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days.

The panel may require further information or documents in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend.

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 this should be carried out.

Unless there is unforeseen delay or the complaint is received just before or during a school holiday, complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 20 working days of the school having received the complaint.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it - this will be final.

This document will also be sent to the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of and will also be made available for inspection on the school premises.

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 where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal or regulatory obligation. Records of complaints will be kept for the legally required time, as stated in our GDPR Data Protection Retention and Destruction Policy.

TIMEFRAMES

The timeframe for a complaint should be that stage 1 and 2 should be completed within 20 working days and if the complaint should progress to stage 3, then it should be completed within another 20 working days. An additional 7 days may be added if the complaint requires a panel hearing.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS AND USE OF PERSONAL DATA

The file of complaints is to be reviewed by the Head not less than termly and will be held as follows:

- PPC: Head's office;
- TPS: Head's office;
- PPSG: Head's office.

A summary of complaints made at each of the schools is tabled for governors' attention at the termly Local Governance Committee (LGC) meetings and an annual summary is produced for scrutiny by the full Governing Body and will be retained.

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all [formal] complaints, whether they are resolved at the [informal stage,] the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice(s). 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 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)
- Notes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the Trust's GDPR Data Protection Policy, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

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(s) [and Retention and Destruction Policy] but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will 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.

If a grievance involves the Head of one school in the Trust it may be raised with the Head of one of the other Trust schools, a Governor, or, if deemed more appropriate, to a member of the Senior Management Team of the school in question.

If the grievance still cannot be resolved it may then be referred to the Chair of Governors by writing to him: Mr Michael King, c/o The Clerk to the Governors, Prior Park College, Bath, BA2 5AH

Parents of students who board may contact the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) regarding any complaint concerning their child's welfare. Contact details for OFSTED are as follows or alternatively, please contact the Department for Education directly. Parents may contact Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they believe a school is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Records of complaints are available to Ofsted and the ISI on request.

Prior Park College and The Paragon School:

Ofsted,
Freshford House,
Redcliffe Way,
Bristol BS1 6NL
Tel: 0300 123 4666 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate,
CAP House,

9-12 Long Lane,
London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100
Email: info@isi.net

Prior Park School Gibraltar
Department of Education,
23 Queensway,
Gibraltar
Tel: +350 20077486/+350 20078638
Fax: +350 20071564
E-mail: info.edu@gibraltar.gov.gi

As well as providing parents with the policy document, we are also obliged to provide information about the number of formal complaints made in the previous academic year. For the sake of clarity, this would not include any complaint settled at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure, but a record of such must be kept.

Academic year 2018-19:

Prior Park College: 3
The Paragon: 0
Prior Park School Gibraltar:0

POLICY STATUS:

The policy has been approved by the Headmasters and the Governing Body of Prior Park Schools. It provides guidelines for handling complaints. It takes account of paragraph 33 (a-k) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 which came into force January 2015 and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The policy applies to all sections of the Schools including the EYFS. The procedures set out above may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.