

## Complaints Procedure

### Whole School including EYFS and Boarding

This Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of pupils (meaning current registered pupils) through the School's website [www.mountschoolyork.co.uk](http://www.mountschoolyork.co.uk) and from the School Office during the school day. The Complaints Procedure does apply to past pupils but only if the concern or complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered and it does not cover exclusions. The procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils. All concerns will be treated in the same way as a complaint and are therefore covered by this policy. If parents of pupils, including boarders and pupils in the EYFS do have a complaint or a concern, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. The School has a three stage Complaints Procedure as follows:

#### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a parent has a complaint, they should contact their child's Form Tutor, Teacher, Before/After School Care Leader or Housemistress (where appropriate). In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the Form Tutor/Teacher/Housemistress or Before/After School Care Leader cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Year and/or the Head of Junior School and/or the Deputy Principal and/or the Head of Boarding.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Junior School or the Deputy Principal will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor/Teacher/Housemistress or Before/After School Leader unless the Head of Junior School or the Deputy Principal deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be passed on to the Head of Junior School or the Deputy Principal and ultimately to the Principal.
- Should the matter not be resolved within **14 working days** or in the event that the key member of staff 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.
- Parents wishing to proceed to Stage 2 of the Procedure must do so within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 1 resolution.

#### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and will decide who should deal with the complaint according to its circumstances.
- In most cases, the Principal and/or the member of staff leading the investigation will speak to and if necessary, meet with the parents concerned, within **14 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations.
- Once the Principal 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. The Principal will also give reasons for their decision.
- If the parent is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- The Principal and any staff involved in dealing with the complaint will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The outcome of the Stage 2 investigation will be communicated to parents within **28 working days** of the Principal receiving the formal Stage 2 written complaint.

- Parents wishing to proceed to Stage 3 of the Procedure must do so within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 resolution.

Although all formal complaints must be made in writing to the Principal, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing to the Principal. 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 Principal is contacted directly by a parent with an initial complaint or concern, they may ask the Deputy Principal or Head of Junior School to deal with the matter in the first instance in line with the informal Stage 1 process.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If a parent seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they are asked to write formally to the Director of Business Operations, who has been appointed by the School Committee to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Director of Business Operations will acknowledge the Stage 3 Panel Hearing request within **5 working days** of receiving the request.
- 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, one of whom shall be independent\* of the management and running of the School.
- The Panel will be provided with clear terms of reference and a clear process and timeline to work to.
- The Director of Business Operations, on behalf of the Panel, will then schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and **within 28 working days** of acknowledging the Stage 3 request.
- 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 **10 working days** prior to the hearing.
- A parent may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person if they wish. 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 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 issue findings on the substance of the complaint and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, 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 parent and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well inspection on the School premises by the School Committee.

Whilst we endeavour to resolve any complaint in the timescales indicated above, there may be cases, perhaps for reasons of holiday or illness, when a deviation from the normal timescale is necessary. These cases will be the exception and in such circumstances the School commits to explain the reasons for any such deviation or delay.

**\* Note:** The DfE has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member:

“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”

### **Arrangements for Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

A written record of formal complaints is kept by the Principal. The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal Stage 2 part of the Procedure. In relation to these complaints, School will record whether they are then resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Stage 3 Panel Hearing. The School will also keep a written record of any action taken by the School as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld).

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 the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is reported to parents annually in the Principal's start of Autumn Term letter.. The School defines formal complaints as those matters which are unable to be resolved at the first informal stage of this Complaints Procedure and proceed to the formal Stage 2.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Any complaint made by a parent of a pupil in the EYFS will follow the procedures above and all complaints will be investigated and the outcome notified to the parent within 28 days of the School having received the complaint. The record of complaints will be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

If a parent of a pupil in the EYFS believes that the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements, then OFSTED may be contacted directly by a parent by calling 0300 1234666. Should the School be inspected by OFSTED we will notify parents and supply a copy of the inspection report to parents of all children attending our EYFS setting on a regular basis.