Complaints Procedure Including EYFS

Abbotsford Preparatory School

1. Introduction

Our policy reflects the DfE guidance, in particular 'Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures' (DfE, 2021) and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (DfE, 2025).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Behaviour and Discipline
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Admissions and Exclusions

Abbotsford Preparatory has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The School understands that parents may occasionally have concerns regarding their child's well-being, progress, achievements and or behaviour. Parents are encouraged to share these concerns with the staff, enabling them to be resolved collaboratively with the School. Should parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Abbotsford Preparatory takes all concerns and complaints seriously and strives to address them informally and promptly, fostering a spirit of partnership.

Abbotsford Preparatory makes its Complaints Policy available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day. Abbotsford Preparatory will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document along with its accompanying Complaints Form is published or made available, as well as the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Abbotsford Preparatory will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Policy and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Note:

Although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for their use; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.
Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates, was still registered as a pupil at the school.
The school will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

2. What Constitutes a Complaint?

An essential part of working in partnership with parents is being notified when, in their opinion, things are not quite right. 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 is 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.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

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] raise[s] in good faith.

3. The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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

For a minor day to day issue contact the child's Form teacher
For a more serious general academic concern, contact the Deputy Head
For pastoral concerns, in the first instance please contact the Form teacher.
For more serious pastoral concerns please contact the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher.

Parents may always write directly to the Headteacher who may refer it to the relevant teacher unless they deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

The teacher 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 ten working days or in the event that the teacher 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 Complaints Procedure.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to Ali Khan, the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

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 Headteacher using the Stage 2 Complaints Form available from the Office. The Headteacher may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Headteacher (or their nominee) will meet in person where possible and speak to the parents concerned, within 5 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 further investigations

to be carried out. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School. After meeting within the first five working days, the Headteacher will contact the parents with a clear timeline for the investigation and response.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Headteacher will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of receiving the complaint in writing.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headteacher (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headteacher.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. They should use Stage 3 Complaints Form.

Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to put forward should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Chair of Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.

In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

The clerk to the Panel, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal 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 clerk to the panel will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The clerk, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The remit of the panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the panel.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make a decision as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following 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 parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

4. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. Under no circumstances should there be a delay of as much as 30 days between receiving the complaint and reporting back to parents.

5. Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

6. Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage (Stage 1), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) 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. 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 and contact details 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/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and/or Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

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, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (under section 109 of the 2008 Act), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

7. Academic Year 2024 / 2025

For the academic year 2024/2025 the School received 0 formal complaints.

8. EYFS

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified

by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

9. Confidentiality and additional information

Abbotsford Preparatory will provide ISI/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. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Date	Position	Name of Reviewer	Date of Next Review
August 2025	Headteacher	C Howard	August 2026
August 2025	Proprietor	Mr A. Khan	August 2025