

PERROTT HILL COMPLAINTS POLICY



Day-to-day responsibility for the governance of the school lies with the Board of Governors whilst the Chair of the Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility. Paul Brewster is the governor with specific responsibility for complaints.

Introduction

Perrott Hill has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Policy. Perrott Hill 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, and Perrott Hill will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of 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) Regulation 2014, Perrott Hill will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Policy is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

'Parent(s)' means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

The policy does not cover complaints from members of staff as these are covered by the School's Grievance Policy.

This policy is written with the inclusion of The Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage March 2017 (standard E412) and Boarding Schools: National Minimum Standards 2022 (standard B541).

What Constitutes a Complaint?

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 policy. 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) raise(s) in good faith.

Types of Complaints

The majority of complaints received by the School fall into the following categories:

- **financial and administrative and breach of contract;**
- **academic** (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little prep, progress in a particular subject etc);
- **pastoral care** (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child, accommodation etc);
- **safeguarding** (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Governors

- for adopting the policy, procedures, and guidelines;
- for receiving reports from the Head and advising the Head;
- for receiving reports and findings from the panel.

The Board of Governors will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly. The Board of Governors will also monitor the School's response to complaints and any panel recommendations. (The Board of Governors may delegate some or all of these responsibilities to a committee or one of their number, e.g. the Chair.)

Chair of the Board of Governors

- for receiving any formal complaints that implicate the Head;
- for receiving any child protection issues that implicate the Head;
- for appointing a panel of at least three people, none of whom were directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and at least one of whom is independent of the management and running of the School (usually a governor) to hear complaints from complainants not satisfied with the School's response.

Chair of the Independent Panel (an appropriate governor)

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties;
- findings are communicated to the parent and school within three days of the hearing.

Clerk to the Board of Governors (Bursar)

The Clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the School's response or when the complainant is formally implicating the Head.

The Clerk must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record the proceedings;
- notify the parties of the decision.

In the event of the School's complaints procedure being fully exhausted, the Clerk must notify parents in writing that the School cannot settle the complaint and will signpost them towards a certified Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider stating whether or not the School intends to use ADR in that particular instance.

Head

- for the overall internal management of the procedures;
- for ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- for ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents and pupils on request;
- for hearing complaints at the second stage;
- for ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the Board of Governors.

Deputy Head/Director of Studies

- for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints;
- for keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedure;
- for compiling reports for the Head as required.

Bursar for administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints.

Heads of Department/Subject for dealing with, and where possible resolving, concerns/complaints relating to their department/subject at stage 1 of the procedures.

Form Tutors for dealing with and, where possible, resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care. Heads of Lower, Middle and Upper Prep are available to provide assistance as may prove helpful in such situations.

Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for receiving any safeguarding issues that do not implicate the Head.

All staff

- for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff;

- informing the relevant staff of the concerns;
- passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Deputy Head.

Procedures

Parental and Pupil complaint forms can be found at the end of this policy and can also be obtained via:

- the School's website
- School Office
- Form Tutor
- School Nurse
- Houseparents
- Deputy Head/Director of Studies
- Head

Complainants may wish to contact Independent Schools Inspectorate (details above) or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Somerset County Council (for any matter relating to a child or adult at risk call 0300 123 2224 or refer to www.somersetsafeguardingchildrenboard.org.uk) for advice on how to register a complaint.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

All staff and governors should be conversant with this procedure.

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' and pupils' complaints, recognising that, regardless of what their own feelings might be, it is a matter of great concern to the complainant. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's/daughter's Form Tutor or Houseparent. It is the School's policy to respond to the verbal complaint as soon as possible and usually within 24 hours, even if the issue cannot be entirely resolved in 24 hours. This may take longer at weekends or during school holidays. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the Form Tutor or Houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Lower, Middle or Upper Prep, the Deputy Head/Director of Studies or another relevant member of staff.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Lower, Middle or Upper Prep, the Deputy Head/Director of Studies or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor, Houseparent or other relevant member of staff unless the Head of Lower, Middle or Upper Prep, the Deputy Head/Director of Studies or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor or Houseparent will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Informal resolution should normally take no more than **three working days**. If a longer

period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant should be informed, within three days, of the reasons, and the new date for resolution.

- If a member of staff considers the issue to be serious, he/she should inform the Head and inform the complainant of the action taken.
- In more serious cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing or fill in a 'Complaints Form' (available at the end of this policy). This is to ensure that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by the members of the School staff.
- If a serious complaint is made by a pupil, the member of staff should immediately inform the Head who will discuss the issue with the relevant members of staff, in order to determine what the course of action should be.
- If the complaint concerns a child protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff the named Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for child protection should be informed.
- In any cases of doubt, members of staff should seek the advice of the Deputy Head and/or Head.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the Board of Governors whose contact details are available from the Clerk to the Board of Governors (Bursar) on request.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, he/she will be advised to make a formal complaint in writing to the Head and proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

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.
- When a written formal complaint is received, the Head will typically acknowledge this within **three working days** during term time; however, outside of term time the complaint will be acknowledged as soon as possible. In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned within **five 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 Head, or their nominee, to consult the relevant staff, carry out further investigations and he will attempt to resolve the issue as soon as possible.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision. In most cases the Head will make his decision and provide the parents with reasons within **three term time weeks** of the complaint being put in writing.
- In the event of all or part of what would otherwise be the three working weeks period falling in the School holidays, the Head will seek an outcome of the investigation as soon as is reasonably practicable and will notify the complainant in writing with an explanation if the three working weeks period of time will need to be extended.

- If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. The complainant must be advised by the Head to write to the Chair of the Board of Governors via the Clerk giving details of the complaint.

STAGE 3 -PANEL HEARING

- Complainants who are not satisfied by the School's decision at Stage 2 regarding the complaint can request to proceed to Stage 3, which is a hearing by an independent panel.
- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Board of Governors, within five days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. The Chair will be notified by the Clerk on the day the written complaint for the Chair is received. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

Clerk to the Board of Governors
 Perrott Hill School
 North Perrott
 Somerset
 TA18 7SL
wrobertson@perrotthill.com

- The Chair of Governors will nominate the Panel and the Clerk to the Board of Governors, 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 and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within **three working days** and schedule a hearing to take place within **three term time weeks**.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any other 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** before the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish, and where relevant translations/interpreters must be arranged by the Clerk in consultation with the parties. The Head

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 normally be appropriate. 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. Careful consideration must be taken when the complainant is a pupil.
- 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
 - uphold the complaint in whole or part; and
 - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within **five working days** of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The panel will hear the appeal, consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by email or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairs of Directors and Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School's premises by the Chairs of Directors and Governors and the Head.

Board of Governors' Action

The Board of Governors, after consultation with the Head, will consider the Panel's findings and recommendations and make such decisions as it feels are necessary in the circumstances. The Board's decision is the final response on the matter.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

In July 2013, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Directive and the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Regulation concerning consumers and service providers was published. As a 'service provider' to the parents' 'consumer', the School is obliged (since July 2015, and in the event of the School complaints procedure being fully exhausted) to signpost parents, in writing, towards a certified Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider, stating whether or not it (the School) intends to use ADR in that particular instance. The use of such a provider is voluntary on the parts of both the parent and the School.

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 four working weeks. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further four working weeks.

Please note that, for the purpose of this procedure, working days refer 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.

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 may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Recording and Reporting Complaints and the Use of Personal Data

In accordance with Part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at 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). In all such cases, it is important that records, including supporting documentation, of all complaints and the action taken is recorded and traced. The record will detail the stages taken in resolving the complaint and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld). The School's written record of complaints will identify those relating to the EYFS and those relating to boarding.

A record of complaints reaching stages 2 and /or 3 is kept for a minimum of 3 years. Where complaints may in any way relate to the work of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, the Head will prescribe that they be retained until such time as the work of the inquiry has ceased.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Policy. 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 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' (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 also do so in accordance with its Privacy Policy and Data Protection Policy.

The Clerk to the Board of Governors will ensure that all correspondence, statements and records pertaining to complaints recorded in writing are kept confidential and secure, 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. This would include the statutory investigation being carried out by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

The Head and Deputy Head/Director of Studies will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Head will report to staff from time to time and to the Board of Governors each term on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Policy. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to 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.

Perrott Hill 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 Policy.

Parents may complain directly to ISI or Ofsted if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. The contact details are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
Cap House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100
concerns@isi.net

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 1231

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Formal Complaints Procedure in the year (2022-2023)

For the academic year 2022-2023 the School received one formal complaint, resolved in full at stage 2.

Formal Complaints Procedure in the year (2021-2022)

For the academic year 2021-2022 the School received one formal complaint, resolved in full at stage 2.

Formal Complaints Procedure in the year (2020-2021)

For the academic year 2020-2021 the School received no formal complaints.

Formal Complaints Procedure in the year (2019-2020)

For the academic year 2019-2020 the School received two formal complaints, both resolved in full at stage 2.

Formal Complaints Procedure in the year (2018-2019)

For the academic year 2018-2019 the School received three formal complaints, all resolved in full at Stage 2.



COMPLAINT FORM FOR PARENTS

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

For Internal Use Only

Action Taken: _____

Outcome: _____

Issue passed to: _____ **Date/Time:** _____

Seen: Senior Member of Staff (Name): _____ **Date/Time:** _____

Deputy Head/Director of Studies: _____ **Date/Time:** _____

Head: _____ **Date/Time:** _____

It is the School's policy to respond to the complaint within 24 hours and the School will notify the complainant of the outcome of the investigation within 3 working weeks (term-time) of having received the complaint. (See full policy for details.)

PERROTT HILL SCHOOL
COMPLAINTS POLICY



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COMPLAINT FORM FOR PUPILS

Please use this form if you wish to make a complaint about anyone or anything that you feel has upset you. If you do not wish to give your name you do not have to. This form may be given in to the School Office, any Form Tutor, School Nurse, Houseparents, Deputy Head, Director of Studies or Head. You may also post the form in the 'Worry' box.

Remember: there is always someone to talk to.

Look at the 'Circle of Care' for advice on who you can talk to. You are also free to contact the School independent listener, Mrs Hoskyns. You may wish to contact ChildLine on 0800 1111.

Name: (you don't have to give your name): _____

Date: _____

Nature of Complaint: _____

Member of Staff receiving the complaint: _____

Action Taken: _____

Outcome: _____

Issue Passed to: _____

Date/Time: _____

Seen: Senior Member of Staff (Name):

Date/Time: _____

Deputy Head/Director of Studies:

Date/Time: _____

Head:

Date/Time: _____

Parent:

Date/Time: _____

Copies, please, to Pupil File and Central File (Head's Study).