



## SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS



2024 - 2025

*Approved by:* Headteacher

*Date:* September 2024

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## **Introduction**

Hale Preparatory School 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 Procedure.

Hale Preparatory School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. Hale Preparatory School 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, Hale Preparatory School 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 Procedure 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 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 only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headteacher to exclude or require the removal of a pupil in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

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

## **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 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] raise[s] in good faith.*

## **The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure**

### **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 child's Form teacher.*  
*In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.*
- Complaints made directly to a Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.*
- The Form teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received (this will be recorded in CPOMS). Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that the Form teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the Headteacher/Deputy*

Headteacher will get involved to try to resolve the complaint amicably. If this is unsuccessful, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

- If, however, the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Directors of Hale Prep School 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. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet/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 the Headteacher, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint (recorded in CPOMS).
- Once the Headteacher 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 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 the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made to the Directors of Hale Prep School. The Directors will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Directors 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 Directors are 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 Directors will give reasons for their decision.*

- *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 Directors of Hale Prep School within 15 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.*
- *The Directors will then nominate one of the 4 Directors to lead the Complaints Panel. This Director will create the Complaints Panel consisting of three persons. No panel member will be a party to the complaint, and at least one member will be independent of the running and management of the school. Examples of persons suitable for serving on the panel – are retired business people and people with a legal background*

*The nominated Director will appoint one Panel member to act as a Chair of the Panel.*

*The nominated Director, 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 5 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 Headteacher 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 Directors 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 findings 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 10 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 Directors and the Headteacher. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Directors and Headteacher.
- Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headteacher to exclude or require the removal of the pupil will be governed by Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Headteacher to reconsider their decision.

### **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 school 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.

## **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints (on CPOMS), whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), 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 will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation.

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about a reception child (aged 4), 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.

Hale Preparatory School will provide ISI 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.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI (Appendix 2)



## *Appendix 1 Number of Complaints*

*Schools are required to publish the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year.*

*There were two formal complaints in the academic year 2023 -2024. These were resolved at stage 2.*

## Appendix 2 Contact Details

Contact details for ISI

Independent Schools  
Inspectorate CAP House  
9 - 12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA  
Telephone 020 7600 0100  
[concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

Contact details for OFSTED

**By email**

[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

**By telephone**

The following helplines are open from 8.00am to 6.45pm,  
Monday to Friday: general helpline 0300 123 1231

**By post**

Ofsted  
Piccadilly  
Gate Store  
Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD