



PRESTFELDE

PRESTFELDE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Preamble

- I. Prestfelde is proud of the success of the children at the school. Our Mission remains *to enable all girls and boys to develop their love of learning, academic potential and individual talents in a caring Christian community which fosters sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life*. This Mission cannot be achieved without unity of effort from the Prestfelde family - staff, children and parents working in an open, fair, friendly, professional and reasonable way.
- II. In accordance with the schools' Terms and Conditions, if you have cause for concern as to a matter of safety, care, discipline or progress of your child you must inform the School without delay. The School welcomes feedback and particularly the notification of concerns, which in the first instance should be directed to the form teacher, and will always take reasonable steps to resolve any such concerns promptly and in a sympathetic way.
- III. There may be areas of subjectivity (such as setting or team selection) that can create the potential for a sense of unfair treatment. Prestfelde encourages parents/guardians to highlight such worries whilst remaining mindful that all decisions are taken with the best of intentions and generally based upon experience and evidence.
- IV. Prestfelde's highly capable staff are committed to the children and work very hard for their benefit. Despite this, there may be occasion when something 'slips-through'.
- V. If an issue is serious enough to merit a formal complaint, such complaints should be made in accordance with this Procedure. It outlines clearly the steps the School will take to address any such complaint professionally and fairly and in a reasonable timescale.

- VI. By submitting a concern or complaint under this Procedure, notwithstanding the circumstances giving rise to it, you undertake to pursue it in a courteous and constructive manner and will at all times avoid unreasonable or harassing behaviour or conduct towards any member of the School's staff.

References:

- A: **ISBA: Model Complaints Procedure Version: 1.0 (issued August 2017)**
B: The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISS Regulations)
C: Boarding Schools: National Minimum Standards, April 2015
D: ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools – Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements, September, 2017
E: The Early Years Foundation Stage: Statutory Framework, March 2017

1. Introduction

Prestfelde has always been proud of the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils, and also the 'open door' access which parents have to both senior management and teaching staff when any problems arise. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Procedure.

Prestfelde 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, and Prestfelde will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

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

2. 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 so something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. Any complaint should be accompanied by what action is requested to be taken or what is wanted to be achieved. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

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.

3. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (no more than 10 working days). 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 (Monday – Friday) if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (no more than 35 days).

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (no more than 35 days).

For EYFS settings, written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 20 working days.

4. Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or

proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the school by paragraph 33(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 - where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

School staff will remain mindful of their obligation under the Data Protection Act 1998 (and then, from May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation) to keep such information for no longer than is necessary.

Should a member of the resident staff in boarding be suspended pending investigation, the school will undertake to find alternative accommodation away from children in situations where the person is unable to move out of school accommodation into their own accommodation. (Please see Safeguarding Policy for more detail)

5. The three-stage Complaint 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 tutor/subject teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the form tutor or subject teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Department.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or subject teacher unless the head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The form tutor or subject teacher will normally make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days, or in the event that the form tutor or subject 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 Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

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.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
- 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 reasonably 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 the decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and in most cases, will speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. He/she may be accompanied by another governor and he/she may also request a meeting with himself, parents and the Head present. Once the Chairman 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 Chairman 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.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Bursar, who has been appointed by the Directors/Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. If the complaint is against the Bursar, the Head will stand in.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel, appointed by the Directors, for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. There will be two directors and the third member who shall be independent of the management and running of the school with appropriate background and experience. The Bursar, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three 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. This may be a relative, teacher or friend.
- 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 all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of the decision and the reasons for it, normally 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 Chairman of Governors and the Head.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The School will proactively engage in a respectful and sympathetic way to achieve satisfaction for the complainant, although this will not always be possible. Anyone submitting a complaint should be aware that whilst feedback is actively encouraged, beyond legal obligations, the Governors and Head will make the final decisions on all policies and procedures (including academic) in the school and, in the case of valid complaints, any reasonable and proportionate remedies that are in line with the objects of the School and its core values.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The School Governors will receive a report annually from the Head indicating the number and nature of any complaints, the recommended action or decisions taken and the outcome of those decisions.

Notes

EYFS

RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS:

Prestfelde School 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 for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

There was 1 formal complaint in the 2016/17 academic year.

The Chairman of Governors' contact details are on the 'Contact Us' area of the school website.

(Reviewed Autumn 2018. Next Review Autumn 2019 by Bursar/Governors)

APPROVED DATE	September, 2018		
REVIEW DATE	September, 2019		
SIGNED HEAD		PRINT NAME	Fiona Orchard
SIGNED CHAIR OF GOVERNORS		PRINT NAME	Stuart Hay