



MALTMAN'S GREEN
SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure for Parents

This policy also applies to the EYFS

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Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

We take great care with the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our pupils. However, if parents do wish to make a complaint, they can expect the following procedure to apply.

This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Time Frame for making a Complaint and Definition of Working Day

Any parent who wishes to raise a complaint, must do so within 3 months of the incident, or where a series of linked incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents. The School will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

For the purposes of the complaints procedure, 'working days' shall mean working days during school term time. However, the Headmistress will need to ascertain the exact time required to secure the necessary information and, if there is the need to go beyond this time scale, will inform the parents accordingly in writing. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Procedure

1.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their daughter's form teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved at this level to the parents' satisfaction.

If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with a member of the School Senior Leadership Team.

Any complaints made directly to the Headmistress will usually be referred back to the relevant member of staff unless the Headmistress considers it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should this be the case, the aim will still be to resolve the matter informally. However, the involvement of the Headmistress at this stage will be in exceptional circumstances.

Stage 1 complaints will normally be addressed within 7 working days from the point at which they are received. Where there are reasons which prevent this from happening, the staff member dealing with the complaint will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.

A written record of all complaints will be kept (regardless of whether they are upheld) and this will include the date on which the complaint was received, the action taken and the outcome.

Should the matter not be resolved informally, despite the teacher's best efforts, then the parents are able to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

1.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint informally, then the parents should itemise the specifics of their complaint in writing to the Headmistress within 10 working days from the conclusion of stage 1 (as outlined above). The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take including the person to take the lead in any investigation.

The Headmistress will respond to parents within 5 working days indicating how the school proposes to proceed.

It may be necessary for the Headmistress, or the person taking the lead, to carry out further investigations. If this is the case then written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, during the course of the investigation, a decision will be made in relation to the complaint within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received. Parents will be informed of the decision, and the reasoning behind it, in writing.

Where it is not possible to give a full reply within 10 working days, the Headmistress will notify the parents and provide an amended time frame.

It is expected that a resolution will be reached at this stage and that parents will feel assured that all their concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

Note: Should a parent wish to raise a complaint about the Headmistress, they should contact the Chair of Governors by telephone or writing in the first instance, who will investigate the matter. Contact details for the Chair of Governors are available from the school office (office@maltmansgreen.com or telephone: 01753 883022). Such a complaint will normally be dealt with within 15 working days of receiving it.

1.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

Where the parents are not satisfied with the response or process undertaken at Stage 2, the matter will be referred to a Complaints Panel.

To request a hearing before the Complaints Review Panel, parents should write to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receipt of the decision at Stage 2 above. This request will only normally be considered if the parents have completed the procedure at Stage 2.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 complaint in writing within 10 working days and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint.

The Complaints Panel consists of two further Governors, who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint nor have any connection with the pupil or family concerned, and a third party who is independent of the management and running of the School. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint that have not previously been raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The parents who have lodged the complaint must be allowed to attend and can be accompanied to a panel hearing if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. Recordings of hearings are not permitted.

If the Chair of the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, s/he may require that further particulars of the complaint and any relevant documents or records be supplied in advance of the panel meeting. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all the parties wherever practicable and not later than 5 working days prior to this hearing.

If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without need for further investigation.

A written record of the proceedings will be taken.

After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of their decision and the reasons for it.

The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Headmistress and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made. A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be held confidentially and made available for inspection in the school by the proprietor and by inspectors on request.

This exhausts the complaints procedure after the decision has been communicated in writing. The decision of the Complaints Panel is Final.

Early Years

This policy is compliant with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2023. Where parents believe that the School is not fulfilling the requirements of the EYFS they are entitled to raise concerns with either ISI or Ofsted (see below for contact details). The leaflet: 'Complaints to Ofsted about Schools: Guidance for Parents', reference 080113 may be downloaded from www.ofsted.gov.uk. This indicates the procedures for making a complaint.

All complaints relating to the EYFS are investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. A complaint may also be made directly to the DfE, using the following weblink: [https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education).

Where parents do not believe that an Early Years complaint has been resolved they can raise this with Ofsted via email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 1231. All paperwork with regard to complaints to Ofsted will be kept by the School for 3 years.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be exceptional occasions when, despite the following of all stages of the procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, Maltman's Green School reserves the right to inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Where a complainant seeks to raise a subsequent complaint matter which is otherwise different to the original complaint at Stage 3, this matter in itself would be treated as a new informal complaint.

Recording of Complaints

All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are duly recorded in the School's Complaints Log, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result. The stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential. The exceptions to confidentiality are the Secretary of State or an inspection body. The School will make available to an inspectorate on request a written record of any complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result.

Publication

This policy is published on the school website.

Provisions Relating to Complaints dealt with using this Procedure

For the avoidance of doubt, no complaint may be made under this procedure in respect of matters which have already been dealt with in an appeal under the school's Exclusion Policy.

This procedure will not be relevant where other statutory or organisational provisions apply, for example, child protection, racial incidents or special educational provision. If concerns relate to child protection matters, the appropriate Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures will be followed.

This procedure cannot be used to deal with appeals following expulsion or removal. There is a separate procedure in place in accordance with the parent contract.

Nothing in this policy shall prejudice the right of parents of a pupil with SEN or a disability to seek redress from the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they believe their child has received unfavourable treatment.

A complaint can be made by any parent (or person deemed to have parental responsibility under the terms of the Children Act 2004) of a pupil registered at the school.

A complaint cannot be raised in relation to a pupil who has left the school, unless the issue was first raised when the pupil was on roll. The child is taken off roll on the final day of the term in which they leave.

When the complaint concerns only the matter of finance such as fees in lieu which remain outstanding, the matter of the fees owed alone falls outside the scope of this procedure. The Headmistress remains responsible for all financial decisions.

Where a parent is unhappy with this procedure, they can contact the Department for Education (DfE).

Complaints from groups of parents linked to the leadership team and/or management style will not be heard collectively. Confidentiality must be maintained for each individual complaint.

Contact details for inspectorates:

The Independent School Inspectorate:

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

complaints@isi.net

Telephone: 0207 6000 100

Ofsted:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

This procedure will be reviewed and updated annually by the Headmistress and Governors.

Appendix 1: Suggested Panel Hearing Procedures

Meeting Format

The meeting will take the form of a "round the table" hearing. Those present will include:

- The Panel Members, including Governors
- The parents who have made the complaint
- Any person whom the parents have brought as a supporter
- The Headmistress (or her representative)
- Other appropriate members of staff.

Minutes

The School will ensure that minutes of the meeting are taken. Any notes produced by the School will not be verbatim and will belong to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman may authorise the release of the notes providing they remain confidential. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. Please note, witnesses called by any of the parties may be asked to leave the hearing after participating as requested by the Panel.

Suggested Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions by the Chairman.
2. Parents present their complaints.
3. The Panel and the Headmistress may ask questions of parents for clarification. Questions should be put through the Chairman of the Panel who can intervene if they think the questions are inappropriate.
4. The Headmistress puts forward the School's case, explaining the reasons for the decision and consideration and calling witnesses, if necessary.
5. The Parents and Panel members may ask questions of the Headmistress for clarification. Questions should be put forward through the Chairman who can intervene as necessary.
6. The Headmistress is invited to make any further relevant points.
7. The Parents are then invited to make any further relevant points.
8. When the Panel is satisfied that it has established facts sufficient for it to make its decision, the Chairman may bring the hearing to a close and inform the parties that they will be notified in writing of the decision, normally within fifteen working days.
9. The hearing then concludes. The Panel's subsequent deliberations will take place in private.

Legal Advice

If, during the hearing, parents introduce legal points on which the Panel feels it will need advice, it will consider one of two options:

- The Panel may decide to take a careful note of points made and to consider the advice of the School's lawyers before making its final decision.
- If the Panel feels that an urgent response is required, it may adjourn the hearing to take advice from the School's lawyers.

Appendix 2: Formal complaints made within the last academic year

There were 3 formal complaints at level 2 made within the 2023/2024 academic year, one of which remains open. There were no formal complaints which progressed to level 3.