

Elm Green Preparatory School



Complaints Policy

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including those in EYFS

Reviewed by SMT March 2026
Ratified by Principal March 2026
Next Review March 2027
Previously 33A

ELM GREEN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The school prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, when a concern is received, the school will treat it in accordance with the complaints procedure. This policy is available to all parents on the school website or from the school office.

AIMS

This procedure aims to resolve issues as quickly and fully as possible.

The school aims to resolve concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible. It is only where there is dissatisfaction with the outcomes of such informal means that further steps may be taken. The formal complaints procedure may then be invoked.

Concerns or complaints received by school can be categorised as

- Financial and administrative
- Academic (e.g. course content, quality of teaching, too much/too little homework)
- Pastoral (e.g. discipline or indiscipline, bullying, unhappiness of child, sanctions)
- Child Protection (e.g. allegations against staff, mishandling of sensitive issues)
- Staff Conduct

Consequently, the school aims to ensure that appropriate members of staff address complaints.

PRINCIPLES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure is not intended to replace the normal discussions, which take place in schools on a day-to-day basis on problems and concerns as they arise. Individual members of staff need to be clear that a concern/complaint is distinct from any formal disciplinary procedures.

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that may develop into formal complaints. It is often helpful to resolve concerns immediately. If appropriate, it may be sufficient to acknowledge that a complaint is valid in whole or in part and offer an apology, an explanation, an admission that the situation could have been handled better, an explanation that measures have been taken to avoid a repetition or an undertaking that the relevant school policy will be reviewed in light of the concern or complaint.

Parents, pupils and others can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, records and statements will be kept confidential except so far as is required by the relevant Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations when disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where other legal obligation prevails.

The procedure should be effective by: -

- Encouraging resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Being easily accessible, publicised, simple and easy to understand
- Being impartial and non-adversarial
- Allowing swift handling with established time-limits for action
- Keeping individuals informed of progress and development
- Observing confidentiality
- Addressing all points of issue providing an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- Informing the management to ensure that services are improved and developed
- Ensuring a full and fair investigation by an independent Panel where necessary
- Linking to other relevant policies e.g. behaviour, disciplinary and competence policies

STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- If parents have a concern or complaint regarding their child's academic development or pastoral care they should normally contact their child's class teacher. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to contact a relevant Specialist Teacher/Curriculum Co-ordinator/ Deputy Head or the Principal. Occasionally it may be the specialist subject teacher who is the first point of contact regarding a specific concern. In the majority of cases the matter should be resolved straightaway or within 24 hours to the parents' satisfaction.
- Concerns or complaints regarding financial or administrative issues should be referred and dealt with by the school's finance and office staff and referred onwards as necessary.
- Complaints made directly to Specialist Teachers/Curriculum Co-ordinators/Deputy Head or the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the recipient deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- A written record of all concerns and complaints is held centrally by the Principal with the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that staff members and parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with a Formal Resolution.
- The Principal will maintain a record of all complaints and their outcomes

There are 2 stages to this formal resolution. It is important that the person or Panel investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet or contact the complainant if unsure or more information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put matters right
- Interview those involved in the complaint allowing a companion if required
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist with questioning
- Keep notes of any interviews/meetings

STAGE 2 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaints in writing to the Principal who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Principal will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 2 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 Principal to carry out further investigations and these will be completed promptly within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. It may be necessary to extend these time scales in exceptional circumstances such as school closure or staff absences.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These records will include the stage at which the complaints were resolved as well as the outcome.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practical, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3.

STAGE 3 - FORMAL RESOLUTION: PANEL HEARING

- If parents choose to invoke Stage 3 in situations where a resolution has not been achieved, the Principal will convene a Complaints Panel for consideration of the matter. The Panel will consist of at least three persons who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Each Panel member will be appointed by the Principal. One of these Panel members shall be completely independent of the management and running of the school*. The Principal, 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.
- The Panel may require further particulars of the complaint or any related matter to be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars should be supplied to all parties not later than 8 working days prior to the hearing.
- Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will write to parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. Further investigation should be completed within

10 working days. A copy of the Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be provided to: -

1. the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
2. available for inspection on the school premises by the Principal

RECORDS

The Principal maintains a record of all complaints with details of whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing. Records detail the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints whether upheld or not.

All records regarding complaints are stored confidentially.

EYFS

- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days.
- The record of complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request
- Where parents believe the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements they may wish to contact Ofsted whose address is Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD (general helpline is 0300 123 1231; textphone is 0161 618 8524) or ISI whose contact address is The Independent Schools' Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA (020 7600 0100).

Complaints will be collated and analysed by the SMT each year and information passed to the Principal. Parents may request information on the number of complaints and outcomes over the previous 12 months from the Principal by contacting the school office.

*The DfE has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member. "Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered."

ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

All complaints received in the academic year 2024-25 were informal complaints and were resolved at the informal level. This policy is reviewed at least annually and is included in the School's policy review schedule.

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Elm Green Preparatory School is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all pupils in accordance with its Safeguarding, Child Protection and Promoting Pupil Welfare Policy.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

The aims of the School and the principles of excellent pastoral care will be applied to all children in accordance with the School's Equal Opportunities Policy.