

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

Central to the philosophy of the school is 'openness'. Children, parents and staff are encouraged to be open in their views, and to question the way things are done. This extends to 'complaints'. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines a complaint as an 'utterance of grievance' or 'formal accusation'. Before a 'complaint' reaches the formal stage it will often be the case that a prior concern has already been raised at an informal level.

The formal complaints procedure is not a substitute for good day-to-day communication where we encourage all parties to discuss and resolve issues in a supportive atmosphere. Many problems can be solved on an informal footing very satisfactorily if all parties are prepared to keep the channels of communication between themselves open and working well. The formal procedure is designed to deal with those issues that need to be approached on a more structured basis so that every route to a satisfactory solution can be explored and so that any decisions reached or actions agreed are binding and long lasting.

This policy is circulated to parents when a child is enrolled at Moor Park (and on subsequent occasions when there has been a significant revision). It is always available on request and is available on the Moor Park website. The policy satisfies the requirements of Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Contact numbers for the appropriate local and national safeguarding and regulatory authorities are included in the contacts list at Annex A.

The policy is in two parts. The first is a description of the general avenues available to children, staff and parents to raise concerns or complaints. The second is a description of Moor Park's formal complaints procedure.

GENERAL AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION

CHILDREN

Children are encouraged to speak out and air their views and concerns. Serious issues are more likely to be raised verbally than in writing but the basic principles of the formal complaints procedure would be followed.

❖ **Form Teachers/Tutors**

Children meet daily with their Form Teacher and regularly with their Tutors. With a longer form teacher/tutor period once per week. The first contact point for any concern or query.

❖ **The School Council**

Meets twice a term and comprises elected representation from each year group with children meeting beforehand to discuss issues they would like raised.

❖ **The School Counsellor/s**

An opportunity for confidential access to an independent adult (see Child Protection Policy and 'Key Contacts').

❖ **'Suggestions Box'**

Kept in the Stone Hall, an alternative method for the children to voice their ideas, concerns or complaints. The contents are checked weekly.

❖ **Boarding Staff**

Key contacts for boarding pupils. It is policy to ensure that the children are given the opportunity to speak with a member of staff that they feel comfortable confiding in, whether it is a pastoral concern or a complaint.

A list of people whom children may contact if they are worried or if their concerns are not being heard is posted by each telephone. This includes the school counsellors, Childline and the local safeguarding authority. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

STAFF

❖ **Induction Process**

A programme of reviews and provision of information designed to address any initial concerns of new staff. All new staff are given a 'mentor' with whom general issues can be discussed.

❖ **Staff meetings**

Usually held at the start of each term and weekly are both opportunities to raise any general concerns or issues.

❖ **Chapter**

A daily information meeting where urgent issues can be raised.

❖ **Appraisals**

Every two years staff will be reviewed where personal and career issues can be discussed.

❖ **The Head**

In keeping with the 'openness' of the school, the Head has an 'open door policy': staff are positively encouraged to air their views, safe in the knowledge that any matter discussed, whenever possible, will remain confidential.

❖ **Grievance Procedure**

The 'formal' complaints procedure for staff.

PARENTS

❖ **Form Teacher/Tutor**

The first contact point for most issues. The form teacher/tutor has a pastoral and academic remit for all pupils in his/her form.

❖ **School Secretary**

A communication point who can advise on, and refer the complaint to, the best person for a particular issue.

❖ **Informal meeting with the Head**

However small the concern, any parent should not hesitate to approach the Head if they feel most comfortable broaching a topic at this level.

❖ **MPPA**

A useful forum of parents to air general concerns.

❖ **Formal Complaints Procedure**

For serious issues or where a parent remains dissatisfied after less formal approaches, the Complaints Procedure is designed to ensure that concerns are addressed quickly and in a structured way (see below).

FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Parents & Third Parties)

All concerns and complaints should, ultimately, be brought before the Head whether formally or informally. If it has not been possible to resolve a particular issue at the informal level a formal complaint can be lodged with the Head.

Raising the Complaint

A formal complaint should be lodged in writing with the Head stating the nature of the complaint and, where relevant and practical, an outline of any informal representations already made.

- ❖ The school will respond in writing within 48 hours setting out the action it intends to take in investigating the complaint and the likely timescale.
- ❖ The length of time needed to resolve the complaint will be dependent on the nature of the issue raised but the school will aim to resolve any complaint within two weeks.
- ❖ The Head will inform the Chair of Governors of the formal complaint.

Investigating the Complaint

- ❖ The Head will make an initial investigation that will normally include a meeting with the complainant.
- ❖ The Head will notify the complainant in writing if the issue has been resolved at this stage or whether further investigations and meetings with the complainant will be necessary.

Notification of Response/Resolution

- ❖ The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the investigation within two weeks of the complaint being lodged.
- ❖ A copy of the findings and recommendations of the investigation will be given to the complainant, Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person being complained about.

Appeal

- ❖ If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response he/she may appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors within two weeks of receiving the school's response.
- ❖ The Chair of Governors will review the documentation of the Head's investigation. Within two weeks of receipt of the Appeal the complainant will be notified if the Appeal is upheld, or be offered the opportunity of proceeding to a panel hearing.
- ❖ The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors. The complainant, the Head and other interested parties

may make submissions to the panel either in person or in writing. The complainant may be accompanied at the panel hearing.

- ❖ A copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel will be circulated to the complainant, the Chairman of Governors, the Head and, where relevant, the person being complained about within 5 days of the hearing date.

Recording Complaints

- ❖ A 'Complaints Book' is held in the office of the Head's PA and contains a summary of any formal complaint, the date brought, any subsequent action taken whether resolved at the preliminary or subsequent stage and reference to the location of the relevant paperwork.
- ❖ Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

