



**MAYFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
GRAVESEND**

# **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Last reviewed:** September 2024  
**Next review due by:** September 2027

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

This complaints procedure has been approved by the Governing Body and applies to any complaints raised by parents<sup>1</sup> of pupils currently at Mayfield Grammar School (the School) about the School and/or Mayfield Grammar School Trust (the Trust). This procedure applies to any matter (other than matters which have a discrete statutory process, for example admissions, exclusions, safeguarding, data protection) which has been raised with the School by parents of pupils as a matter of concern but which has not been capable of resolution informally and which the complainant or the School consider should be dealt with on a formal basis. Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be raised directly with the provider.

Complaints that have been raised by persons who are not parents of pupils currently at the School will not be dealt with in accordance with the framework below. Any such complainant should seek to resolve their complaint informally with the Headteacher. If this fails, then the complaint should be put in writing and addressed to the Chair of Governors at the School. The Chair will acknowledge receipt and issue a final written response within 20 school days. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors may require at any time that such a complaint is put in writing in any event.

The School wants to ensure it maintains excellent relationships with parents and the community which it serves. Any complaints will be dealt with in a positive way and the issues raised will be followed up in order to make improvements and ensure the School becomes more effective.

Requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered to ensure that complainants can access and complete the process.

### **In the handling of complaints we aim to:**

- Be polite and understanding
- Respond within the time periods specified in this policy
- Try to offer a remedy or refer to someone who can
- Record the matter in the appropriate way and place
- Improve the aspect of our service about which the complaint was received
- Give feedback on the improvement, where appropriate
- Review our procedures every 3 years
- Offer appropriate training to staff where necessary.

---

<sup>1</sup> References to parents in this policy include carers

## **1. Complaints from parents**

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

The matter should initially be raised informally with the pupil's form tutor and/or learning leader, or, where the issue does not relate to one specific pupil, to a relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team, before a request is made to deal with it formally under stage 2 of this procedure.

The School will seek to resolve matters at the informal stage within 20 school<sup>2</sup> days of the issue being raised.

It is a precondition to the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way. The Chair of Governors shall have discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, to determine that a complaint is 'vexatious' where this precondition has not been met – please see 'vexatious complaints' section below for further information.

Where the matter is not resolved at the informal stage, the parent may elevate it to the formal stage.

Complaints are best dealt with as soon as possible after issues arise. If a parent has not brought a complaint to the attention of the School within 3 months of the date of the issue arising, or, if a series of associated issues/incidents have arisen, within 3 months of the last of these, the Chair of Governors shall have the discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution (Investigation by a Nominated Individual)**

1. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Headteacher, within 10 school days of the School's attempt to resolve the matter informally, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the School has not met reasonable expectations and the outcome sought.
2. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days confirming that an investigation will be carried out by a nominated individual identified by the Headteacher as appropriate, who may offer the complainant a meeting and speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put their findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant and if no meeting is to take place within 25 school days of the complaint being received.

---

<sup>2</sup> School days in this policy refers to days when the school is open to pupils for teaching, and does not include INSET days. Complaints received outside of term time will be deemed to have been received on the next school day.

Any complaint relating to the Headteacher must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a governor to investigate.

Where a complaint is brought against a Governor, the Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint (or appoint another Governor to do so).

If the complaint is against the Chair of Governors, then a Chair of one of the Committees or a Member, whichever is most appropriate will investigate the complaint (or appoint another Governor to do so).

### **Stage 3 – Formal Resolution (Investigation by the Chair of Governors)**

4. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Chair of Governors, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the School has not met reasonable expectations, within 10 school days of the Stage 2 response. The complainant should set out why they are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome and the outcome sought.
5. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days confirming that an investigation will be carried out by the Chair of Governors (or by another appointed Governor) as appropriate, who may offer the complainant a meeting and speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
6. The investigator will put their findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant and if no meeting is to take place within 25 school days of the complaint being received.

### **Stage 4 – Formal Resolution (Panel Hearing)**

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the investigator, they may request that the complaint be considered by a complaints panel which will comprise at least three people who have not previously been directly involved in the matter including one person who is independent of the management and running of the School. The request must be in writing, addressed to the Governance Professional at the School, and submitted within 10 school days of the findings at Stage 3 being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response and the outcome sought.
2. The Governance Professional will invite the School to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The School will do this within 15 school days of receiving the request and at the end of that period (whether or not the School has responded) the Governance Professional will convene a meeting of a complaints panel. That meeting will be held on school premises as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the School and the members of the panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the School's response time. At any

meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and which will be at the Chair's absolute and sole discretion.

3. The meeting is not a court case, it will be held in private and will be as informal as circumstances allow. For this reason, electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a parent's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before the recording of the meeting takes place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. The complainant will have the opportunity to put forward their reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The School will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the panel.
4. The panel's findings may also include recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be
  - (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
  - (ii) available for inspection on school premises by the Trust and the headteacher.
5. The panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the Governance Professional will notify all concerned.

### **Attendance at a Complaints Panel Hearing**

The complaints panel will proceed irrespective of whether or not the complainant and/or their representative attend. If the complainant fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the complaints panel will still proceed in their absence and the process will continue to its conclusion. Any further attempt to re-open the matter will be considered as falling under the serial/persistent complaint section as below.

### **Serial or persistent complaints**

If a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, and that continued correspondence is vexatious and that the Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

### **Vexatious complaints**

Complaints with the following characteristics may be deemed to be vexatious:

- obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;

- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

In such cases, the Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the complaint is deemed to be vexatious and that the School will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

### **Anonymous complaints**

Where an anonymous complaint is received, the School will use its reasonable endeavours to consider the complaint as best as it reasonably can. However, the School will not be required to consider the complaint pursuant to any specific process and will handle anonymous complaints on a case-by-case basis.

### **Complaint Campaigns**

Where the School receives a number of complaints all based on the same subject which in its reasonable opinion may be deemed a 'complaint campaign' it will deal with the complaints in the following way: individual responses will not be sent to complainants in such cases. Instead, either a template response will be sent to all complainants, or a single response will be published on the School's website at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.

Where the complaint campaign involves complainants who are parents, they will be entitled to escalate the complaint to a panel hearing if they are dissatisfied with the School's response. The School will consider how best to manage panel hearings in such circumstances.

### **Record Keeping**

A written record will be kept of all complaints that were resolved at the formal stage of the complaints procedure. Records will contain details of whether the complaint was resolved at stage 2, stage 3 or whether it proceeded to a stage 4 panel hearing. The action taken by the school as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded. The Governance Professional will maintain the record of all formal complaints.

### **Confidentiality**

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

## **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**

Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to lodge requests to escalate the complaint to the next stage within the time stated in the policy) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied, then they may contact the ESFA. There is an online procedure at:

<https://form.education.gov.uk> or alternatively in writing to:

Complaints team  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

## **2. Complaints from pupils**

Complaints from pupils may be made via any of the following routes:

The Form Tutor  
The Learning Leader  
The House Official  
The Assistant Headteacher – Pastoral Care 11-16  
The Assistant Headteacher – Post-16  
The Deputy Headteacher  
The Headteacher.

### **Response to Pupil Complaints**

- The initial complaint will be officially recorded.
- These are most properly handled by the Form Tutor or Learning Leader in the first instance.
- Depending upon the seriousness of the complaint, the member of staff will either carry out the appropriate investigation themselves or pass it on to a more senior colleague.
- The pupil will always be treated with courtesy and patience and will be offered a solution to their complaint as soon as possible.
- The issue may require a longer period of monitoring in order to ensure that the solution is working.
- If the matter is serious, it will be referred to the School's Senior Leadership Team for advice and/or information. Parents may be informed.

## **3. Complaints from staff**

Whilst a grievance procedure exists, we should try to resolve all concerns informally in the first instance.

It is advisable that staff raise their concerns with their line manager in the first instance.

If the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction, it should be referred to the relevant Assistant Headteacher, who will look into the matter and advise accordingly.

Should the matter still be unresolved it will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher.

#### **4. Bring about Improvement in Response to Complaints**

- The internal management structure of the school ensures that line managers are always informed of a complaint received by a more junior colleague.

Updated September 2024