

ST AMBROSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL



Complaints Policy

Reviewed: September 2025 by SH

This policy has been written in consultation with staff and governors of St. Ambrose Preparatory School and with due regard to the school's mission statement:

At St Ambrose Preparatory School
we are joyful learners and are inspired to always do our best.
We nurture the many gifts we have been given and seek to use them wisely for the benefit of ourselves and others.
We put love into action each day so we are advocates of change in the world,
Living the Gospel and the Catholic faith and Celebrating the values of Blessed Edmund Rice,
With our family and the whole Ambrosian community.

'Have courage, the good seed will grow up in the children's hearts'
Blessed Edmund Rice

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be an exemplar Edmund Rice School, with an enviable reputation amongst our peers, both as an organisation and for the services and facilities we provide, making us first choice for parents and pupils in our geographic area.

Our Ethos & Values

At St Ambrose we provide a Catholic school community in which pupils feel welcome, safe, recognised for their individuality – supported by a community of love, and affection. We strive to live the Gospel in all aspects of school life and policy, following Blessed Edmund's footsteps.

COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR PARENTS

The Governing Body of St. Ambrose Prep School understands its regulatory responsibilities and will maintain an effective oversight of this policy, by evaluating its effectiveness, and reviewing and implementing change.

1.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way.
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously.
- We take action where appropriate.

The aim of this policy is to outline how a parent can expect a complaint to be treated. A parent correspondence log details a brief summary of communications relating to matters where parents sought clarification, raised concerns or made a formal complaint. Details relating to concerns and formal complaints are logged in the complaints file via the head teacher.

- (a) This policy applies to all parents or guardians whose children are pupils at St Ambrose Preparatory School, including pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- (b) It applies to the parents or guardians of current pupils only, and is not applicable to complaints raised by parents of prospective pupils or by parents of former pupils, unless the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was still registered at the school.
- (c) Matters relating to safeguarding are not within the scope of this policy. Should a complaint or allegation relate to a safeguarding matter then immediate contact should be made with the Head teacher, who is also the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- (d) Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under the procedures laid out in this policy. However, the Head teacher or Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
- (e) For the purposes of this policy, "working day" refers to whole school days during term time.
- (f) If a complaint is made outside of term time, the Head teacher will make every effort to investigate the complaint as soon as reasonably possible.
- (g) The time limits set at each stage will be adhered to wherever possible; however, if further investigations by the School or by external agencies are necessary, the time allowed may need to be extended. In such cases, the complainant will be sent details of the extended deadline, with an explanation of the reasons for extending. Time limits may also be subject to reasonable variance during periods of exceptional disruption to school life.

2. Introduction

St Ambrose Prep School is committed to taking all concerns and complaints seriously, at the earliest stage. The majority of issues raised by parents or guardians at St Ambrose Prep would be classified as concerns rather than complaints. However, legally, any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is classified as a complaint, and within the scope of this policy, whatever it may be labelled.

The complaints procedure the school follows has three distinct stages. The three stages (outlined in more detail below) are:

- **Stage 1:** Informal resolution
- **Stage 2:** Formal resolution
- **Stage 3:** Panel hearing

In almost all cases, concerns and complaints are able to be resolved quickly and satisfactorily at Stage 1.

3. General Principles

- a) The prime aim of the school's policy is to resolve a complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.
- b) Any complaint should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible, and preferably within three months of the incident. The school will, however, consider complaints made outside this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- c) All complaints will be dealt with in confidence and matters brought to the Governing Board will remain confidential to the complainant, the Governors and the school. The Governing Board and school request that complainants likewise treat matters they raise, and information and documents which they receive pursuant to the complaint's procedure, as confidential.
- d) If a parent wishes to withdraw his/her complaint at any time in the procedure, this must be confirmed in writing.
- e) Notes are usually kept of concerns and complaints resolved under Stage 1; this allows the school to monitor its performance and make improvements where necessary.
- f) A written record will be kept of all complaints whether they were resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they were upheld. (see appendix A)

- g) Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
- h) The record of a complaint is kept for a minimum of 7 years.

4. Procedure

St Ambrose Prep School Complaints Policy has three main stages. In summary, they are as follows: -

Three Stages in the Procedure

Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a staff member.

Stage 2 – A Formal Written Complaint is heard by the Head teacher

Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

Stage 1 – Raising a concern

1. Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern.
2. The school requests that parents make their first contact with the child's class teacher or with a more senior member of staff if the matter is sensitive or confidential or involves the class teacher.
3. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case the parent will receive an informal but informed response within 10 working days.
4. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.
5. Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a serious or confidential nature, they may also write to or make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Head teacher. The Head teacher will seek a resolution and report back to parents within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.
6. In the event that the school and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution at Stage 1, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure as outlined below.

Stage 2 – A formal written complaint is made to the Head teacher who will seek a resolution.

1. The parent should write to the Head teacher stating that they wish to make a formal complaint.

2. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two school working days of receiving it.
3. A meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.
4. The Head teacher may also consult other members of staff.
5. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible.
6. Following the investigation, the Head teacher will give a written response to the complainant within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received.
7. If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 2, then the complainant may follow the procedures outlined at Stage 3 below. This must be done within 5 working days of the response from the Head teacher.

Complaint about the Head Teacher:

1. If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will then arrange for an investigation to be carried out and will inform the complainant of their decision, and the reasons for it, in writing within 25 working days of receipt of the complaint.
2. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 2, they may follow the procedures outlined at Stage 3.

Stage 3 – A formal written complaint is made to the Chair of Governors who will form a Complaints Panel

1. A panel hearing cannot usually be requested unless Stage 2 of this procedure has been completed.
2. The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint impartially and achieve reconciliation between the School and the complainant.
3. The complainant must write to the Chair of Governors requesting a panel hearing.
4. The complainant should outline the particulars of their complaint and the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the School's resolution of it at Stage 2.
5. The complainant must indicate whether they would like to attend the panel hearing at which their complaint will be considered, or whether they agree the hearing may take place in their absence.
6. The request for a panel hearing must be made as soon as possible, and in any event within 5 working days of the decision at Stage 2 of the complaint being notified to them.
7. The Chair or a Nominated Governor will convene a complaints panel.
8. The panel will consist of two Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint, including any underlining matters detailed in the complaint, and one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.
9. The process for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the Department of Education.

10. The hearing will take place within fifteen working days of the receipt of the written request for a Stage 3 Panel Hearing.
 11. The parent (or parents) may be accompanied by one other person at the panel hearing. This may be a relative or friend. It will not normally be appropriate for the complainant to be legally represented at the hearing, and legal representation requires the prior approval of the panel chair.
 12. The panel hearing should proceed, even if the parent subsequently decides not to attend, unless the parent indicates in writing that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
 13. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 working days after the date of the hearing.
 14. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Head teacher, the Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated.
 15. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body, the member will be informed of the complaint.
 16. After investigation the panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of the findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about.
 17. The findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Head teacher, teacher or the Clerk to the Chair of Governors.
- The Governors Appeal Hearing is the Final Stage of the school's Complaints process.

Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel.

The Panel can -

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part, and recommend appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- It is not within the powers of the panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents, although they may recommend these actions to the Head Teacher or the Governing Body.

Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

1. Despite all stages of the complaint's procedure having been followed, there may be rare occasions when a parent remains dissatisfied and a resolution cannot be reached.
2. If a complainant seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

3. Where repeated attempts are made to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of the complaint's procedure, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.
4. Behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may also constitute an unreasonable complaint.

EYFS

Written complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted 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

Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

The School is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) which is an independent body which reports to the Department of Education.

All parents have the right to contact the ISI if they have a complaint. The ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure first before contacting them.

ISI: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA (telephone: 020 7600 0100)

The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

In accordance with the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Provision of Information: Part 6, Paragraph 32. (3)(f)) the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is stated below.

Number of complaints registered 2024-25 - 0

Appendix
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ST AMBROSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Complainant: _____

Date of Complaint: _____

Nature of Complaint:

Resolution:

Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____