MERTON COURT SCHOOL



Parental Complaints Policy

This policy applies to the whole school inclusive of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

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To be reviewed by: Headmaster and the above team by: October 2027	
Signed by the Headmaster/Proprietor:	
Shared with the staff on:	3/11/26
Put on Website:	3/11/26

Circulation:

This policy is for the attention of the Leadership Team, all members of the teaching staff, the support staff, parents and the Advisory Board. These procedures apply to all parents of children of the school. Merton Court School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents by a hard copy which can be obtained via the school website or on request from the School Office.

This policy is available for parents of children and prospective children but only applies to current children (i.e. not prospective children nor past children unless the complaint was raised when they were children at the school).

This policy does not cover exclusions. The Behaviour and Exclusion Policy is available upon request from the School Office.

The expression 'parents' is used for those having parental responsibility for the child.

Introduction

The purpose of the procedure

Merton Court School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to all of its children. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated seriously and as quickly as possible by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This procedure encompasses **the Early Years**

Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is the aim of this procedure to resolve complaints either to the parent's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of children. Children and parents will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale. Those who have complaints should feel these can be voiced and that they will be taken seriously. The priority will always be to respond to any concerns at an early stage and to resolve complaints speedily.

Additionally, Merton Court School will make available to parents of children, and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector (Ofsted), the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of Section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the number of complaints registered and conducted under the formal (Stage 2) procedure during the preceding year. For this purpose, a record of all formal complaints and their resolution is maintained and overseen by the Proprietors and the Advisory Board.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem relating to academic or pastoral life in school. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. The procedure does not apply to prospective children but it does cover exclusions. Please note also that the school will not be able to investigate or deal with letters or complaints that are anonymous. (Complaints relating to school fees should be addressed to our Accounts Dept in the first instance, then the Business Manager and ultimately the Proprietor).

Three stages: This policy describes a three-stage procedure

Stage 1 - Informal resolution of a concern, difficulty or informal complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff.

Stage 2 - A formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster.

Stage 3 - A reference to the Complaints Panel.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The timescales identified in this procedure refer to calendar days and are relevant to term time only and are subject to change in the school holiday periods. It will be the aim to always resolve issues as quickly as possible taking into account the need to obtain all relevant information. All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. The complaint will be acknowledged **five (5) working days** if received during term time and within **twenty (20) working days** during the School Holiday.

Recording Complaints

The school maintains a written record of all complaints made and processed in accordance in with Stages 2 and 3 of the Complaints Policy. The written record will indicate the action taken by the school as a result of and in the complaint, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.

If a complaint is not informally or fully resolved in Stage 1, a written record is kept and the matter will then be considered formally at stage 2 of this policy (the formal stage)

The school's record of a complaint that is addressed in accordance with Stage 2 will contain the following information:

- Date when complaint was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of child
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations at stage 1 (informal) (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

At all stages within this policy complaints information will be marked **'Confidential'** and all parties are expected to adhere to this expectation. **All information will 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.**

Confidential files on all complaints that are at Stage 2 will be maintained by the school, kept together and cross-referenced with other files as necessary. The files will contain simple but clear notes and records of conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to any conversations on the complaint, to minimise the risk of misunderstandings arising. All concerns expressed by the complainant will be fully and carefully set out in order to ensure that all matters are thoroughly investigated. The notes and records will be agreed with parents at each stage to ensure accuracy and to focus attention on any resolved or unresolved issues.

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

Our priority will be to do everything that is reasonably possible to resolve any concerns informally and quickly.

- If parents have a complaint about an academic or pastoral matter, they should contact their child's **Form Teacher/EYFS Key workers.** In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/EYFS Co-ordinator cannot resolve the matter alone, they will firstly consult their KS Co-ordinator.

- Complaints made directly to the Headmaster will usually be referred, in the first instance, to the relevant Form Teacher/EYFS Co-ordinator or a Senior Member of staff unless the Headmaster **feels** it more appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher/ EYFS Key workers or Members of the Leadership Team will make **a written record on CPoms of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received** and any action taken by the school as a result. Copies will be kept in the Complaints File. Should the matter not be resolved within **seven (7) school days** or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents, will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with **Stage 2 of this procedure.**

Stage 2 Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis **at Stage 1** of this policy, then the parents will be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster.
- The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. He will decide whether the matter can be resolved at that stage through his intervention or whether further investigation is required to ascertain further facts.
- It is important to note that complainants have the right to pursue a formal investigation if they so wish, regardless of any other form of intervention at this stage.
- In most cases the Headmaster will arrange to meet the parents, normally **within three (3) working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage, within **fourteen (14) days** in term time and **twenty-eight (28) days** if in the School Holiday of receiving the written letter of complaint although it may be necessary for the Headmaster of School to carry out further investigations.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, the Headmaster will set out in writing the findings and conclusions reached and **clear reasons behind the decisions**. The communication will include the right of the complainant to seek further consideration of the complaint **at Stage 3** of this policy.
- If the parents are still not satisfied with any decision made in Stage 2, they will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with **Stage 3** of the Complaints Procedure.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. For all complaints relating to the EYFS, the record of complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.

- Complaints about the Headmaster/Proprietor should be made directly to the Chair of the Advisory Board (Contact details available on request from the School Office.)
- The school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, proceed to a panel hearing or not upheld. The record will also show any actions taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless if they are upheld.)

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

- If the parents wish to proceed to Stage 3, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution the School Administrator will convene a Panel Hearing to investigate and consider the complaint. Parents should invoke Stage 3 by putting their complaint in writing to the Headmaster.
- The Headmaster will ask the School Administrator to call a hearing of a formal Complaints Panel.
- The Panel will always consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. The Headmaster/Proprietor will appoint each of the Panel members. The Headmaster/Proprietor will also acknowledge the complaint and a hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practical and normally within **fourteen (14) school days** of receipt of the parents' letter.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint, or any related matters, be supplied in advance of the Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than **five (5) days** prior to the Hearing.
- After the date of notification of the hearing. Documentation must be relevant to those matters set out in the complaint. The parents will be supplied with copies of any statements and supporting/background documentation provided by the Headmaster to the Panel not less than **seven (7) school days** before the hearing
- Conduct of the hearing shall be at the Panel's discretion which will be exercised in the interests of a fair, effective, and appropriately rapid resolution of the complaint. The Chair of the Panel will normally write to the parents before the hearing, having considered the nature of the complaint and the documentary material, to state how the hearing will be conducted.
- The 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 necessary or appropriate.
- The Panel will seek to resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation and to reach a conclusion on the issues raised and any actions required. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and set a clear timescale for the collation of relevant information.

- After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach **a final decision** and may make recommendations, that will be completed within **five (5) days of the Hearing.** The Panel will then write to the parents informing them of its decision **within a seven (7) day period** and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster/ Proprietor and, where relevant, the person about whom a complaint has been made. The School will keep a record of complaints for at least **three (3) years.**

Notes for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2026). When a complaint is received from a parent of a child within the EYFS, the School will notify the parent of the outcome of the **investigation within twenty-eight (28) days of having received the complaint.**
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. All information will 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; or where any legal obligation prevails.

- Complaints relating to EYFS requirements may be addressed to the Independent Schools Inspectorate at CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or may be raised by telephone: 020 7600 0100 or via their website: www.isi.net/contact. Parents may also make a complaint directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email on enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk;

Merton Court will provide Ofsted and ISI on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Record of Formal Complaints

The number of any Formal complaints made to the school during the Academic Year is available from the School Office.

Complaints 2025-2026: 'None'

Appendix 1

School Complaints Procedure

Complaint form

Please complete and return to the Headmaster who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Child's name:
Your relationship to the child:
Address:
Post Code:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)
Date: Signed: