

**Complaints Policy**

**Introduction**

Notre Dame Prep School, (NDPS) has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. NDPS makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School’s website and in the School office during the school day, and NDPS will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, NDPS will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

**In the year up to the review of this policy, NDPS has managed no complaints that have reached Stage 2.**

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. Such complaints must be received within 5 days of the pupil being withdrawn. The complaints policy may not be used by parents if a child has been removed from school as a result of a breach of the school’s Terms and Conditions such as the non-payment of fees.

 “Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates. This includes grandparents with Special Guardian Orders (SGO) for example.

**What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

**What isn’t a Complaint?**

According to the school’s terms and conditions, the cessation of a school place as a result of non-payment of school fees may not be deemed unfair. In the absence of any claims of discrimination therefore, the Complaints Policy may not be used to challenge a decision to remove a pupil after non-payment of school fees.

**The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure**

**Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

• It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

• If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter’s Form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head Teacher.

• Complaints made directly to a Head Teacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless it is deemed appropriate for a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to be involved straight away.

• The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that the Form Teacher 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 Complaints Procedure.

• If, however, the complaint is against the Head Teacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors at the following email address: chair@notredameprepschool.co.uk

**Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

• If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher at the following email address: headmaster@notredameprepschool.co.uk The Head Teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

• In most cases, the Head Teacher will meet the parents concerned, within 5 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 Head Teacher, or nominee, to carry out further investigations.

• The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

• Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Teacher will also give reasons for the decision reached. In most cases, the Head Teacher will make a decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

• If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.

• If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

• Any complaint of a decision taken by the Head Teacher to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School’s Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) or Behaviour Policy will be governed by this Stage (2) of the School’s Complaints Procedure and may continue to Stage 3 if necessary. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Head to reconsider the decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head’s decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

**Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

• If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Governors within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. The Chair of Governors can be contacted by emailing chair@notredameprepschool.co.uk

• The Chair of Governors will make known to parents who has been appointed to Chair the Complaints Panel. This panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Not one member of the three members of the complaints panel will have been involved in the Stage 2 process (or indeed Stage 1). The Chair of the complaints panel will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.

• If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

• The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Head Teacher shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they so wish, and if the attendance is deemed appropriate by parents or the Chair of the complaints panel. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

• The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

• If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents’ complaint without the need for further investigation.

 Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:

1. Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
2. Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and make recommendations.

• The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

• Any complaint of a decision taken by the Head Teacher to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School’s Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) or Behaviour Policy may reach Stage 3 of this policy if a satisfactory conclusion has not been reached by the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors thus far. A Complaints Panel in such circumstances, may uphold the complaint and ask the Head Teacher to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head Teacher and subsequently the Chair of Governors, that the Head Teacher’s decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head Teacher to have taken.

**Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone’s interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School’s target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 25 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 30 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

**Persistent correspondence**

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

**Recording Complaints and use of personal data**

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its GDPR Policy. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

• Date when the issue was raised

• Name of parent

• Name of pupil

• Description of the issue

• Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)

• Witness statements (if appropriate)

• Name and contact details 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)

• Notes/minutes of the hearing, and

• The Panel’s written decision

This may include data that could potentially include information relating to physical or mental health where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School’s Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

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.

**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. If parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint concerning the school’s EYFS provision, they are entitled to make a complaint direct to Ofsted and/or ISI if they so wish.

**EY Funding Note:** Where parents/carers are not satisfied that their child is receiving the free entitlement in the correct way (as set out in the funding agreement and in Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities), a complaint can be submitted directly to the Senior Management Team (SMT).

NDPS will provide ISI/Ofsted, 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. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its GDPR Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe NDPS is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Our Complaints Policy is issued to all families as part of the registration process. It is also available via our website [www.notredameprepschool.co.uk](http://www.notredameprepschool.co.uk) or upon request

***Reviewed September 2025 by S Smith***

***Approved September 2025 by L Campbell***

***To be reviewed no later than September 2026***