



FOUNDED 1879

HALLFIELD SCHOOL

**COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE
FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CARERS**

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| Head Master | Mr K Morrow | |
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| Chairman of Governors | Mr G Ralphs | |
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| Staff member with responsibilities | Mr K Morrow | |
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| Subcommittee with responsibilities | Compliance | |
| | | |
| ISI Regulatory Policy | Yes | |
| | | |
| | Date | Spring Term 2024 |
| | | |
| Date for policy review | Spring Term 2025 (unless new legislation requires amendment) | |



HALLFIELD SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CARERS

SCOPE

All parents/ or person with parental responsibility, staff and pupils, including the EYFS, and Out of Hours Care.

This Policy details the procedures in place to deal with a complaint against the school (defined as Hallfield School including Hallfieldfirst (EYFS) by the parent(s) or person with parental responsibility (defined as 'parent') of an existing pupil, or by the parent(s) of a former pupil providing that the complaint is presented within one term of the pupil leaving. This policy is available on the School Web Site.

All Staff must be aware of its provisions.

AIMS

We wish to ensure that:

1. parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
2. we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
3. parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously;
4. we take action where appropriate.

Exclusions

Parents who raise a complaint as a result of being notified of fees in lieu of notice are not eligible to use the complaints process as a mechanism for evading contractual fee obligations. Fees must be up-to-date before a Stage 3 panel hearing will meet.

POLICY STATEMENT

The school strives to create a culture of openness between parents and staff. We place great emphasis on communicating with parents through a variety of formal and informal opportunities, which include, but are not limited to: pupil academic planners, daily drop-off / collection, website, email to teachers, parent 'drop-in' and parents' information evenings and parents' evening.

Parents may have a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. We encourage parents to share their concerns with us at the earliest opportunity so we can work together to resolve them.

Where several complaints either regarding the same member of staff or same issues are raised by a parent, these will be deemed as vexatious. If following investigation and conclusion under Stage 1 of the policy the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they will have the option to progress their complaint to the Head Master under Stage 2 of the policy.

After referral to the Head Master under Stage 2 the conclusion reached for a vexatious complaint will be final and without further recourse or appeal by the complainant.

Time scales – the time scales indicated in this policy refer to term time (the published dates the School is open for pupils for academic lessons, outside holiday care provision) and for a working week (defined as Monday to Friday only).

Where a complaint is made out of term time e.g. regarding a pupil attending all-year round provision (available for 0-4 year old), every effort will be made to contact the Head Master/member of the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the complaint. The Head Master may delegate the initial response / hearing the complaint to another senior member of staff in the case of being unavailable during school holidays.

Hallfield School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise.

This policy is made available to all parents on the school's website.

Complaints will be dealt with within a clear and pre-determined time frame.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

If a parent wishes to make a complaint they should follow the procedures set out below:

STAGE 1. INFORMAL COMPLAINT AND RESOLUTION

1. If a parent, parents or a person with parental responsibility have a complaint they should contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher or Room Leader in Hallfield *first*. In most cases, the matter will be resolved by this means to the parents' satisfaction. The member of staff dealing with the complaint should complete an entry on iSams and send a copy of any complaint or concern / meeting or conversation regarding a complaint to the Head Master's PA. The note should set out the nature of the complaint, name of person raising the issue, what action (if any) has been taken and the date of the complaint.
2. If the complaint cannot be resolved by the member of staff receiving the complaint within two working days, then the member of staff receiving the initial complaint should acknowledge the complaint in writing (which could be an email) and identify the line manager / more senior member of staff who will now be dealing with the complaint and inform the parent. This is usually the Phase Leader or Nursery Manager in the first instance.
3. A record of the complaint and the date on which it was received will be made by the relevant member of staff. At this informal Stage, the Phase Leader or Nursery Manager assigned to deal with the parental complaint should make contact with the complainant within two working days (by email, letter or phone call) and address the complaint or outline a clear time frame for further investigation. The Phase Leader dealing with the complaint should complete an iSams entry (the school's management information system), setting out what action (if any) has been taken and the date the complaint is closed. A copy of this should also be sent to the Head Master's PA, who maintains the Complaints Log.
4. The School keeps a log of all complaints and monitors this for emerging patterns.

STAGE 2. FORMAL COMPLAINT AND RESOLUTION

1. The Phase Leader or Nursery Manager should make it clear to the parent that if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can proceed to the next step of the Parent Complaint Procedure (Stage 2) and write to the Head Master (letter or email) explaining that they wish to make a **formal complaint**.
2. The Head Master may delegate the investigation of the complaint to the appropriate member of the **Senior Leadership Team**, who will respond directly to the parent.
3. The Member of the Senior Leadership Team reviewing the complaint will (where there are no exceptional circumstances) respond in full within 10 working days (two weeks). Parents would be invited in for a face-to-face meeting where possible, and the findings of any investigation shared with parents / followed up after the meeting in writing.
4. The Head Master will review the findings and evidence with the member of the Senior Leadership Team and will usually be present at the parent meeting along with the Senior Leadership Team Member.
5. Copies of notes, correspondence, emails between the school and parents should be recorded by the Senior Leadership Team Member in the Senior Leadership Drive / Complaints Area.

6. The Head Master will write to parents following the meeting and summarise the action the school will take / has taken (where appropriate).
7. Where the complaint applies specifically to EYFS provision, the School will endeavor to respond within the 10 working days, but as the EYFS provision operates outside term-time, the time frame for response may extend up to 28 days (in line with EYFS regulations).
8. The Head Master, or representative, will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, which will also be made available for the complainant.
9. The School retains a written record of formal complaints as part of its complaints procedure, whether they are resolved at the first formal Stage (Stage Two) or proceed to a panel hearing (Stage Three) and of any action taken by the school as a result of a formal complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld).
10. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parent(s) will be informed of this decision in writing, and reasons for the decision given.
11. The Complaints Log is tabled each Term at the Governors' Compliance Sub-Committee meeting.
12. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure (Panel Hearing).
13. Where the complaint is directed specifically at the delegated representative, the procedure will, by necessity, involve the Head Master as appropriate.
14. Where the complaint is specifically about the conduct of the Head Master, (rather than the school's provision) the procedure will, by necessity, be referred to the Chair of Governors to undertake Stage 2 (formal complaint). The complaint should be addressed to **The Clerk to Governors c/o Hallfield School, Church Road, Birmingham B15 3SJ**.
15. The Clerk will refer inform the Chair of Governors, who will appoint a senior member of staff, either a Deputy Head or the Director of Finance & Operations to meet with parents and investigate the complaint on behalf of the Chair.
16. The Chair will then meet with the staff member who carried out the investigation and respond to the parental complaint in writing/meet with the Head Master as appropriate.
17. Where the parents are not satisfied with the written response of the Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair) at Stage 2 (Formal Complaint), they may request to proceed to Stage 3 (Panel Hearing).

STAGE 3. PANEL HEARING

1. Where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made, they should make this clear to the Clerk to Governors in writing within 7 working days of receipt of the response to the complaint (usually by letter) and the school will make provision for a hearing before a panel. The Clerk to the Governing Body will contact the Chair and / or Vice Chair of Governors to convene a Panel to hear the Complaint.
2. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be a person independent of the management and running of the school, and will generally follow the profile of:
 - a. *"people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced argument... Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force..."*
 3. DfE guidance on an independent panel member.

4. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Clerk to the Governors on behalf of the Chair of Governors. The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days (unless exceptional circumstances such as the complainant being on holiday make this time frame impossible).
5. 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than two days before the hearing.
6. The parent(s) may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. The accompanying person should be there in a supportive capacity and can remind or make suggestions to the parent(s) in response to questions from the Panel, however they do not have the right to ask or answer questions on behalf of the parent(s). Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
7. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint without the need for further investigation.
8. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and will communicate their findings and recommendations as soon as possible after the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel will write to all participants (including the complainant, the Board of Governors and, where appropriate, the person about whom the complaint has been made) informing them of the findings, the recommendations and the reasons for these.
9. The Panel decision will be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days of the panel hearing.
10. The decision of the Panel is final. There is no further procedure to deal with a parent not being satisfied with the Panel's decision.
11. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same or similar issue, or the same parent repeatedly raises formal complaints against the school or a member of staff, , this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.
12. Details of complaints received are held centrally and regularly monitored by the Senior Leadership Team. Such written records will include the findings and recommendations from all investigations into complaints. This monitoring is to ensure that any trend is quickly identified and managed in the best interests of our pupils.
13. Records of all complaints will be made available for Governor scrutiny and are tabled at the termly meeting of the Compliance Sub Committee. Complaint statistics and trends are reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis in the Head Master's Report.
14. The written record of complaints held by the school will indicate whether they were resolved at the preliminary Stage or moved to a panel hearing. These will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Board of Governors and / or Chair of Compliance Sub Committee.
15. Records of all complaints will be made available during inspection and when requested by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and OFSTED (in the case of EYFS provision).
16. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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.
17. A record of all complaints made is kept for seven years.
18. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year are detailed at the end of this Policy, which is on the School's website, and is therefore publicly available to any prospective parent.
19. The Independent Schools Inspectorate inspects the EYFS, educational and boarding provision and compliance in Independent Schools.

20. As a registered setting catering for children under the age of two years old, the School is also registered with OFSTED for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):
21. Any parents / carers who are concerned that the EYFS requirements are not being met may contact OFSTED.

Contact details:

ISI: Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 – 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

General enquiries: Tel: 020 7600 0100 e-mail: info@isi.net
Concerns about a school: Tel: 020 7710 9900 e-mail: concerns@isi.net

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 4666 e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

For the academic year 2021-22, there was one formal complaint (Stage 3) Panel Hearing that was not upheld.