PINEWOOD

Est. 1875

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A Whole-School policy including the EYFS

Introduction

The School 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 in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. This procedure is made available to all parents of current pupils, on the School website or on request as stated in the Parent Contract. Although this procedure is available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

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 is within the scope of this procedure. 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.

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 the relevant Form Tutor / Head of Department or, in some cases, simply the teacher concerned. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of School, Deputy Head or Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor / Head of Department/ Head of School unless the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The person handling the complaint will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 48 hours of receipt and make a written record of all concerns and complaints. Should the matter not be resolved within 2 weeks or in the event that the member of staff dealing with the matter and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

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 Headmaster. The Headmaster will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 48 hours of receipt and decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Headmaster will write to or 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. However, if the complaint is received when the School is not in session, and depending on the nature of the complaint, then parents may have to wait until the School re-opens as it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out investigations. If this is the case then the Headmaster will contact the parents concerned within 7 days and advise them on any necessary delay due to the recess.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster 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 within 14 days of having received the complaint. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all relevant documents. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 within 28 days of having received the complaint. The Chairman 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.
- EYFS Requirement. The School must investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so by writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 7 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. The Clerk to the Governors can be contacted via email: simonmason@pinewoodschool.co.uk Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 48 hours of receipt and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 14 days during term time or 28 days if the school is on recess.

- The Clerk will refer the matter to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two Members of Council not involved directly in the matter detailed in the complaint, and a further person whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Panel will appoint one member to act as Chair.

- 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 3 days prior to the Hearing.
- The parents may attend the Panel Hearing and may be accompanied by one other person if they wish. The Head shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. 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 remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chairman of Governors and 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 the merits of the complaint and all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
  - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
  - Uphold the complaint 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 email or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and, the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

<u>Recording Complaints</u>

- Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints that proceed under the formal part of this Complaints Procedure i.e. Stage 2 as well as details of those that proceed to Panel Hearing. This will include details of any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). This detail will be recorded in the School's Complaints Log held by the Headmaster (or held by the Chairman of the Governors if the complaint was against the Headmaster) and will contain the follow information as a minimum:
  - Date when the issue was raised
  - Name of parent making the complaint
  - Name of pupil
  - Description of the issue
  - Any findings/decisions made
  - Any recommendations made
  - Any actions taken

Further information such as records of all investigations, witness statements, names of staff handling the issue at each stage and copies of all correspondence on the issue may also be kept by the School's discretion.

- Records will be kept for a minimum of 25 [1]years and made available to ISI.

General Points

- Governors will be kept informed of all formal complaints on an annual basis or more regularly if the Headmaster deems it necessary to do so.
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 108 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils, without unreasonable delay.

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Pinewood School will provide 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. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retentions of Records Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

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

Over the Academic year 2025/26 the school received 2 formal complaints.

Reviewed September 2026
Reviewed by Neal Bailey, Headmaster
Next Review Date: September 2027

Reviewed and approved by: Governance Committee
Review Date: 23 January 2025
Next Review Date: February 2026

[1] Amended from 6 years to 25 years on 23 April 24 following review of insurance provision by the Bursar with Marsh. Advice is for a minimum of 25 years.