COMPLAINTS:
POLICY & PROCEDURES

Documents consulted

- Independent Schools Inspectorate Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements
- Department for Education Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020

This policy covers the requirements for Early Years Foundation Stage, Primary and Secondary Schools.

Definition

Any matter about which a parent/guardian of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is considered to be a complaint and is in the scope of the procedures detailed within this policy.

Introduction

Manchester High School for Girls is an independent school and as such is a self-regulating community independent of the state system of education. It has a culture based on mutual dependence of all its elements. Its integrity depends on everyone working towards the common aims and objectives and adhering to the policies and procedures of the school.

The school aims to work cooperatively and in partnership with parents/guardians. It is recognised, however, that there are times when there will be issues that are not resolved to the satisfaction of parents/guardians, and that they will wish to make a complaint.

If parents/guardians do have a complaint, the School will treat it in accordance with the policy and procedures detailed below. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly, sensitively and informally. Responding to complaints will be given the highest priority by the School and will be dealt with comprehensively.

Information to Parents/Guardians

The policy applies to complaints from existing pupils or former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when they were pupils at the School and is not available to those outside of the School, such as parents of prospective pupils. A copy of this policy can be found/seen:

- on the School's website
- in the Parent Handbook, issued in June/July
- upon request

Principles

The School takes feedback from parents / guardians very seriously.

The complaint should be acknowledged, when possible, within one working day of receipt and investigation into a complaint should begin within two days of receipt of the complaint, where possible and practicable.

Staff should listen carefully and patiently to complaints. Even if the complaint is ill-founded, it is a matter of concern to the parent/guardian and/or the pupil.

If the issue is simple (for example, a parent is concerned that their child is upset at the insensitive behaviour of one of her peers) and within the competence and authority of the member of staff receiving the complaint to resolve quickly, this should be done and the Head of Year / Head of Section/ Head of Preparatory School informed at the earliest opportunity via an Interview Form or using CPOMs.

With regard to more serious complaints (such as a complaint about the quality of teaching or insensitivity by a member of staff), written details will be recorded either on an Interview Form or on CPOMs by any member of staff receiving a complaint. The parent/guardian should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant senior staff, in the first instance normally the Head of Year / Head of Section/ Head of Preparatory School, who will follow Stage One of the Complaints Procedure.

If the complaint concerns a Child Protection issue the complaint should be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead: Deputy Head (Pastoral) in Senior School or Head of the Preparatory School as appropriate. Very serious complaints of other types (for example, racial abuse) should be referred directly to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head of the Preparatory School as appropriate.

If the complaint concerns an allegation of abuse by a member of the School staff (for example, inappropriate relationships between a pupil and a member of staff), the complaint should be referred immediately to the Head Mistress. If the Head Mistress is not available or if the allegation involves the Head Mistress, suspicions should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will contact the Chair of Governors.

The intention is to adhere to the timeframes cited in this policy. However, there may be occasions when these timeframes will need to be extended. If timeframes have to be extended, the reasoning for so doing will be made clear and communicated to the complainant.

Confidentiality

The School will keep a log of informal complaints recording the date and nature of the complaint and action taken by the School for any complaint from a parent/guardian of a pupil dealt with at Stage 1. The log of informal complaints will be stored in a confidential file with the complaints-related documentation.

The School will keep a log of formal complaints recording the date and nature of the complaint and action taken by the School (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld) for any complaint from a parent/guardian of a pupil dealt with at Stage 2 or 3. The log of formal complaints will be stored in a confidential file with the complaints-related documentation which will include correspondence from and to the complainant, any statements and other records. Information on a complaint relating to a particular member of staff will be stored in the confidential file of that member of staff.

Records of complaints records and the related documentation will be made available to an ISI inspection team on request.

Documentation about a complaint will be stored on school premises for at least seven years after the pupil has left the School and longer for those complaints relating to safeguarding issues.

Any meetings that take place must not be recorded, unless doing so will enable the School to conform to the Equality Act. All parties must agree to the recording of a meeting.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

The School is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. (Independent Schools with no Early Years Foundation Stage below the age of three are not required to be registered with Ofsted.)

ISI contact details are available on their website. They may be contacted by telephone by parents/guardians wishing to make a complaint on 020 7776 8849.

Informal and formal procedures for responding to complaints

Stage 1 Informal resolution

- If parents/guardians have a complaint, they should normally contact their daughter's Head of Year/ Head of Section or the Head of the Preparatory School. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Head of Year/ Head of Section or the Head of the Preparatory School may refer the complaint to a more appropriate member of staff; for example it may be necessary to consult the Deputy Head (Teaching and Learning), the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or the Director of Sixth-Form in the Senior Department.

- In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly by this means to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction. If the complaint involves the quality of teaching in the Senior School, the Head of Department will normally be consulted by the Head of Year prior to any discussion with the subject teacher concerned, and the Head of Department may be involved in any interviews. Parents/guardians may expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint **within five working days** of having made the complaint.

- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Preparatory School, Deputy Head or the Head Mistress will usually be referred to the relevant Head of Year or Preparatory Class Teacher unless it is felt to be more appropriate that the recipient of the complaint should deal with the matter personally.

- The Head of Year/ Head of Section/ Head of Department / Head of Preparatory School will make a written record, on a School Interview Form or on CPOMs, of all concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the action taken. This will be passed or notified to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who will evaluate the response to the complaint. The member of SLT will then complete the Stage 1 Summary Form and forward this and the related paperwork to the PA to the Head Mistress for storing.

- Should the matter not be resolved **within two working weeks** or in the event that the Head of Year or relevant member of the SLT and the parents/guardians fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents/guardians will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

- It is considered good practice to ask the complainant what they think might resolve the complaint. An acknowledgement that the School could have handled a situation better is not the same as an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

Stage 2 Formal resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents/guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Head Mistress. Stage 2 of the process should be invoked within ten working days of the Stage 1 process coming to an end. The Head Mistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action. This may involve one of the Deputy Heads conducting a further investigation into the matter.

- In most cases, the Head Mistress, following her investigation of the issues, will meet the parents/guardians, normally **within ten working days** of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Head Mistress to carry out further investigations.

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

- Once the Head Mistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/guardians will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Mistress will also give reasons for her decision. The written decision will be sent within ten working days of the meeting with the Head Mistress.

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

- Parents/guardians may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure on the following grounds:

  i) that the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of their case through the earlier stages of the procedure;

  ii) that the outcome of the formal stage of the Complaints Procedure was not reasonable;

  iii) that there is new material evidence that for good reason was not available at the earlier stages of the procedure.

  The Stage 3 review stage is not a rehearing of the original complaint. The review stage does not reconsider the underlying matters of the case afresh. New or additional complaints cannot be raised at this point.

- For a complaint to proceed to Stage 3, parents/guardians should have met with the Head Mistress to discuss their concerns, as indicated above.

- Unless there are extenuating circumstances, Stage 3 should be invoked within ten working days of the date of the written response from the Head Mistress to the Stage 2 complaint.

- If parents/guardians seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be advised to contact the Chair of Governors in writing, via the Clerk to the Governors at the School. The Clerk will need the details of the complaint, details as to why stage 3 is invoked, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

- The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receiving the written complaint.

- The Clerk to the Governors will usually share the complaint with the Head Mistress to ascertain whether all aspects of the concern have been considered at Stage 2. If all aspects of the complaint have not been considered at Stage 2, the Clerk will refer the parents/guardians back to Stage 2 of the Complaints process.

- If Stage 3 is invoked, the Chair of Governors, or Governor nominated by the Chair, will set up a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three members not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the School. Two of the three members may be Governors of the School. The Head Mistress may also be in attendance during any panel hearing.

  The independent member of the panel should be a person who has held a position of responsibility and who is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. Serving or

retired business people, civil servants, head teachers or senior staff at other schools and people with a legal background might be considered suitable.

Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors or by a member of the Governing Body to whom this responsibility is delegated.

- The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within fifteen school days of acknowledging the complaint, where possible. However, it should be noted that this may not be possible, given the need to coordinate a meeting between a variety of people. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date and the review panel will meet to consider the complaint.

- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter may be supplied in advance of the hearing. The Panel may ask the Head Mistress for further clarification, as necessary, before proceeding to a hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.**

- The parents/guardians may be accompanied to the Panel Hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the Clerk not later than 2 working days before the hearing. If the Clerk is not informed of the identity of the companions in this timeframe, then they will not be able to be admitted to the Hearing.

- A note taker, usually the Clerk, will attend the hearing to take notes. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. Any disagreement as to the content of the notes or further comments from the parties will be considered by, and where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents'/guardians' complaint immediately 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete **within 10 working days of the Panel Hearing.** The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. Such a decision will include whether some or all of the complaint will be upheld or dismissed or/and whether the Governors have any recommendations for the School as a result of the decision. The decision of the panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing, and at the same time, to the parents/guardians, the Head Mistress, and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint refers. A copy of the findings will be available in the School for inspection by the Chair of Governors and the Head Mistress.

- Parents/Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection (ISI) requests access to them.

Duplicate complaints

At the end of the complaints procedure, if a duplicate complaint is received from a spouse or partner, and the complaint is about the same subject, the new complainant will be

informed that the School has already considered the complaint and the local process is complete.

Complaint Campaigns

It is possible that the School could become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the School

In such an event, it will not be appropriate to follow this policy and either a template response will be made to all complainants or a single response to the complaints will be published on the School's website.

Vexatious Complaints

Vexatious complaints are defined as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistent upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistent upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- complaints that require redress that lack any serious purpose or value

The School will inform the complainant and will stop responding if:

- every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns
- a clear statement of the School's position has been provided
- there are repeated contacts made with the School reiterating the same points
- letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- insulting personal comments about, or threats towards staff are made
- it is deemed that the individual is contacting the School with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Data Protection Complaints

From 19th June 2026, the School is required, under Section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018, to facilitate complaints from individuals about the way in which their personal data has been handled. This includes complaints about how the School has responded to a subject access request, the security measures it applies to personal data, or any other aspect of its data processing. Any complaint of this nature should be submitted by email to administration@mhsg.manchester.sch.uk marked for the attention of the School's Director of Finance and Operations. The School will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 30 days of receipt. The School will investigate your complaint without undue delay and keep you informed of progress. It will communicate the outcome of its investigation to you, including what steps (if any) it proposes to take. If you remain dissatisfied, you may escalate your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (www.ico.org.uk). Nothing in this process prevents a parent from also raising the matter under the School's general complaints procedure. The School will not discourage any parent from doing so.

Responsibilities

The Governing Body will

- Check against the Regulatory Requirements, approve and advise on the complaints policy and procedure.
- Appoint Panel members
- Receive reports on the number of formal complaints
- Appoint one Governor to monitor the implementation of the School Complaints Policy

Prof Fiona Smyth (Governor) will monitor the implementation of the School Complaints Policy. She will do this by reading through the formal complaints received, at least once per year. She may also talk to the Head about any themes identified from the formal complaints received.

The Head Mistress will

- Take responsibility for the efficient implementation of the policy and procedures
- Hear parental/guardian appeals from decisions on complaints handled by other staff
- Present the School's case where the parent/guardian appeals to the Governing Body
- Report on complaints annually to the Governing Body, identifying any themes emanating from those received during the course of the academic year
- Make written records of complaints available to Ofsted or ISI on request.

The Deputy Head (Teaching and Learning) will

- Organise general staff training on how to deal appropriately with complaints
- Support Heads of Department in handling complaints relating to teaching and learning (course programme/ unsatisfactory teaching/ too much or too little homework/ progress in a particular subject)
- Evaluate the School's response to complaints relating to academic concerns
- Collate records of relevant complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and submit these with the completed Stage 1 Summary Form to the PA to the Head Mistress

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will

- Handle complaints relating to Child Protection and complaints about serious matters and discuss these with the Head Mistress
- Support the Heads of Year in handling complaints relating to pastoral and welfare concerns (discipline/ indiscipline/ inappropriate sanctions; bullying; overall academic progress of the student/ unhappiness of the student)
- Evaluate the School's response to complaints relating to pastoral concerns
- Collate records of relevant complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and submit these with the completed Stage 1 Summary Form to the PA to the Head Mistress

The Director of Sixth Form will:

- Support the Heads of Year in handling complaints relating to pastoral and welfare concerns (discipline/ indiscipline/ inappropriate sanctions; bullying; overall academic progress of the student/ unhappiness of the student)
- Evaluate the School's response to complaints relating to sixth form concerns
- Collate records of relevant complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and submit these with the completed Stage 1 Summary Form to the PA to the Head Mistress

The Assistant Head will:

- Handle complaints relating to transport, trips and extra-curricular activities
- Liaise with relevant members of staff as appropriate in resolving complaints
- Collate records of relevant complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and submit these with the completed Stage 1 Summary Form to the PA to the Head Mistress

Heads of Year / Heads of Section will:

- Deal with, and where possible, resolve complaints about overall student progress, discipline issues and pastoral care
- Liaise with Heads of Department in resolving complaints about academic matters, programmes of study and teaching methods
- Keep a record of each complaint (Stage 1/Informal complaints) and the action taken by the School to resolve the complaints. This should be documented on an Interview Form or CPOMs, submitting the form to or notifying the appropriate member of SLT as soon as the investigation into the complaint is complete.
- Liaise with the student's Form Tutor if appropriate

Heads of Department will:

- Work with Heads of Year and the teacher about whom the complaint is made to resolve complaints about academic matters, programmes of study and teaching methods
- Keep a record of each complaint (Stage 1/Informal complaints) and the action taken by the School to resolve the complaints. This should be documented on an Interview Form or CPOMs, submitting the form to the appropriate member of SLT as soon as the investigation into the complaint is complete.

The Head of the Preparatory School will

- Handle all complaints relating to the Preparatory School
- Maintain a log of informal complaints recording the date and nature of the complaint and action taken by the School for any complaint from a parent/guardian of a pupil in the Preparatory School dealt with at Stage 1. The log of informal complaints will be stored in a confidential file with the complaints-related documentation
- Ensure that any documentation relating to a complaint dealt with at Stage 2 or 3 is submitted to the PA to the Head Mistress
- Ensure that written complaints made by parents/guardians about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements are investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within **20 working days**
- Provide parents/guardians with the available details of how to contact Ofsted or ISI if they do not believe that the Preparatory Department is meeting the EYFS requirements

Ofsted	ISI
Piccadilly Gate	CAP House
Store Street	9 – 12 Long Lane
Manchester	London
M21 2WD	EC1A 9HA
0300 123 1231	020 7600 0100
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk	info@isi.net

- Make written records of complaints available to Ofsted or ISI on request

The Director of Finance & Operations will

- Handle complaints relating to finance, accommodation, facilities, contracts and data protection
- Collate records of such complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and submit these to the Head Mistress and to the PA to the Head Mistress

The PA to the Head Mistress will

- Maintain a log of informal complaints recording the date and nature of the complaint and action taken by the School for any complaint from a parent/guardian of a pupil in the Senior Department dealt with at Stage 1. The log of informal complaints will be stored in a confidential file with the complaints-related documentation.
- Maintain a log of formal complaints recording the date and nature of the complaint and action taken by the School dealt with at Stage 2 or Stage 3. The log of formal complaints will be stored in a confidential

file with the complaints-related documentation. This will include correspondence from and to the complainant, statements and other records.

All staff will

- Be responsible for hearing any complaints brought to them by parents/guardians or students and for reassuring them that their complaint will be dealt with as soon as possible, and sensitively, by the appropriate member of staff
- Inform the relevant member of senior staff of the complaint, according to procedures outlined above

There were 2 complaints in writing to the Head Mistress in the 2025-2026 academic year, one of which progressed to Stage 3.

Policy reviewed by Helen Jeys and approved by the Governor Academic Development Committee - Updated by the Head Mistress August 2026.

Stage 1 Summary Form

No	Date	Name of parent	Daughter	Nature of complaint	Action	Staff member receiving initial complaint