



High March

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Person responsible for latest revision:	Mrs B Avery
Page number of any significant changes in latest revision:	
Date of next review:	June 2025
ISI Reference	33a

This policy applies to the Early Year Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Useful Websites

www.highmarch.co.uk

ISSR 7

www.education.gov.uk

www.isi.net

High March Parental Complaints Procedure

High March prides itself on the quality of teaching, its academic results, its Art, Drama, Music and Sport and above all, the pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated seriously and in good faith by the School and in accordance with this Parental Complaints Procedure.

This policy applies to parents of current pupils. In line with the ISI Handbook September 2023 and ISSR Part 7 the policy may only apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The policy does not cover exclusions.

Any matter about which a parent is unhappy or a concern they may have, whether real or perceived, is considered a complaint by the School, whether this be major or minor and hence within the scope of this Procedure. A complaint 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, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

The policy may be accessed by parents on the School website or a hard copy may be obtained by request to the School Office.

Key principles for the handling of complaints

- The School is open to the complaints of parents and pupils and complaints will be received in a constructive manner.
- Parents and pupils can expect their complaints to be taken seriously and may approach any appropriate member of staff about a complaint.
- A written record is kept of any parental complaints in a confidential file held centrally by the Headmistress.
- Information about the way complaints are handled will be clear and readily available.
- A confidential complaints file will be retained in a safe place in School in accordance with GDPR principles and data protection legislation as amended from time to time.
- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained so far as is possible, subject to the School's professional and legal responsibilities.
- The School will aim to resolve the complaint as effectively and sensitively as possible.
- It is preferable for the School to receive a direct complaint to a member of staff rather than hearing of this anecdotally or on the "rumour mill".
- This Procedure is a whole School procedure and incorporates the procedure for making complaints in relation to Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A record of any complaints made under this Procedure, including any complaint in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage, but excluding any complaint with a safeguarding implication, will be retained for at least 7 years from the date of the original complaint.

- The School's compliance with this Policy is related to the operation of its governance, since the directors and governing body have ultimate responsibility for meeting regulatory requirements.
- 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 21 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 21 days, so far as reasonably practicable.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher or the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership or Management Team. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership or Management Team cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Headmistress.

Complaints made directly to the Headmistress will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership or Management Team unless the Headmistress deems it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership or Management Team will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days, so far as reasonably practicable or in the event that the Form Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership or Management Team and the parents 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, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

Within 24 hours of receipt of the original written complaint, so far as is reasonably practicable, the Headmistress will contact the parents again to confirm the next stage of the procedure.

In most cases the Headmistress will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the formal written complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations, including the interviewing of staff and pupils as necessary and desirable in the Headmistress's reasonable opinion.

The Headmistress will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, in 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 Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.

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

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents are unhappy with the decisions reached at Stages 1 and 2 and seek to invoke Stage 3 they will be referred to The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the proprietors, who will convene a hearing of the Complaints Panel unless the parent later indicates that he or she is now satisfied and does not want to proceed further.

The Chair of Governors can be contacted through the School Office 01494 675186.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration, notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel should consider the parents' complaint in his or her or their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning Panel composition. Likewise, if the parents postpone or seek rescheduling of the Panel hearing on an ongoing basis after having been given reasonable opportunities to attend, the Chair of Governors may elect to proceed with the Panel hearing in the best interests of bringing the matter to a conclusion in a fair and reasonable manner. The Panel will consist of at least three members not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, of whom two will be Governors and one will be independent of the management and running of the School, ('the Independent Panel Member') and in particular shall not be a governor of the School. The Independent Panel Member should be someone who has held a position of responsibility and familiar with scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. Examples of a suitable such independent panel member could be a serving or retired business person, a civil servant, a head or senior member of staff at another school, a person with a legal background or a retired member of the Police Force. The Chair of the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than 5 days prior to the hearing, and if such further particulars or evidence are so required, then the date of the Complaints Panel hearing may be adjusted accordingly. If such further particulars are not forthcoming by the above date or at all, the Panel may draw whatever inference is reasonable from the omission to supply such particulars, and to any reason provided for not supplying such particulars.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative,

teacher or friend but not a legal adviser. The Chair of Governors retains discretion to provide fair and reasonable guidelines to the parent's or parents' companion in relation to their conduct before, during and after any Panel hearing.

The Panel will aim to 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, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall aim to complete within 7 days of the Hearing so far as practicable. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, the Headmistress, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be stored in a secure place on the School premises and kept confidential except where required by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 Act. The written record of complaints will specify whether the particular complaint was resolved at a preliminary formal stage or after a full Panel hearing.

If the complaint is against the Headmistress, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmistress and for all the 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. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent or their representative to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy. The School may then take whatever reasonable action in response as advised.

Complaints from Parents of EYFS children will be resolved within 28 days. Parents of EYFS children who are unhappy with the fulfilment of EYFS requirements may, if dissatisfied with the school's decision concerning their complaint, refer matters to Ofsted or the ISI. OFSTED may be contacted at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M12WD; 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk ISI may be contacted at 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA; 0207 600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

Written record of complaints

The School retains a written record of any complaints made in accordance with this Policy and in particular:

- Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing.
- Action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether

they are upheld).

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as required in the course of the School's inspection pursuant to 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; or as otherwise required by law.

Appendix 1

Record of Formal Complaints

In the academic year 2023 to 2024 one formal complaint was received by the School.