



# MILTON ABBEY

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Introduction

Milton Abbey 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 Procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as disclosure is required by law or in the course of the School's statutory inspection.

A copy of this procedure can be found on the School's website and is available to: (a) the parents of pupils and prospective pupils at the school; (b) pupils at the school and (c) staff.

Please note that no complaint may be brought under the Procedure in relation to the non-payment of any sum(s) owing to the School. If a parent has a complaint regarding any action taken (or proposed to be taken) by the School as a result of his/her failure to pay any sum(s) owing to the School the parent may write to the Clerk to the Governors of Milton Abbey School, who will refer the matter to the Chair of Governors.

### THE PROCEDURE

#### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a parent has a complaint they should normally contact their child's Housemaster (HsM). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parent's satisfaction. If the HsM cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head.

- The HsM (as the case may be) will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant HsM unless the Head deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally (the Head will not be personally involved at this stage).
- Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days or in the event that the HsM and the parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parent(s) 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 parent(s) should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide the appropriate course of action to take, after considering the complaint and consulting with the Deputy Head, if deemed necessary.
- The Head will normally meet with the parent(s) within seven 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 to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parent(s) will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the parent(s) is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – The Complaints Panel**

- If the parent(s) wishes to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should send written notice of their complaint to the Clerk to the Governors of Milton Abbey School. The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration.
- In their written notice of complaint, the parent(s) should give reasonable particulars of their complaint and should specify the outcome they are seeking.

- The Panel will consist of at least three persons who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the School.
- Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors of Milton Abbey School.
- The Panel shall nominate one of their number as Chairman of the Panel.
- The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint on behalf of the Panel and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within twenty-eight days of his receipt of the complaint.
- The Panel will be directed to make findings and recommendations. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and Head.
- In the case of a complaint regarding a pupil's suspension or exclusion, the Head shall have complete discretion as to whether to implement the suspension or exclusion of the pupil, pending the Panel's decision.
- At least seven days before the hearing, the Head shall submit to the Panel a written statement setting out his own views in relation to the parent's complaint. The Clerk shall give a copy of the Head's statement to the parent(s).
- 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 the parent(s) not later than three days prior to the hearing.
- The Panel may conduct such interviews before the hearing as it sees fit. The Panel will arrange for the parent(s) to be given, before the hearing, either a copy of the minutes of the interviews or a summary of the comments made by the interviewees that are relevant to the parent's complaint.
- At least three days prior to the hearing the parent(s) shall submit to the Clerk copies of all documentation they intend to rely upon at the hearing.
- On request, the parent(s) shall be provided with a copy of their child's school file.
- There may be circumstances where it would be more suitable to hold the hearing outside the School. In those circumstances, the Clerk will arrange for a more neutral location (e.g. another school in the locality).

- The parent(s) may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- If the Chairman of the Panel shall so decide, the proceedings may be recorded.
- The Chairman of the Panel will not normally permit any person under the age of 18 or any pupil at the School to attend the hearing.
- If the Chairman of the Panel reasonably believes that the Panel should hear evidence from an individual in private (i.e. in the absence of the parent(s) bringing the complaint or any third party), he/she may so decide. In those circumstances, the parent(s) will be given reasons for that decision. The parent(s) will be given a summary of the individual's evidence after the event if the Chairman believes the evidence to be relevant to the parent's complaint.
- The Panel may make decisions by majority vote.
- The Panel's findings in relation to the parent's complaint shall be documented in the form of a report.
- Within ten days after the hearing, the Clerk will send the parent(s) and the Head a copy of the Panel's draft report. If the parent(s) believe that the Panel has not accurately summarised their complaint in the report, the parent(s) shall inform the Clerk in writing within seven days thereafter, giving details of the alleged inaccuracies. If the Head believes that the Panel has not accurately summarised his views in relation to the parent's complaint, he shall likewise inform the Clerk in writing within seven days thereafter, giving details of the alleged inaccuracies. The Panel shall then finalise its report.
- The Panel's report will be sent to the parent(s), the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.
- The Panel's report shall state its decision in respect of the parent's complaint. The decision of the Panel in respect of the parent's complaint will be final and binding.
- The School should maintain a record of all parent complaints for at least three years for regular review by a senior member of staff. The record shall indicate whether a complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.
- Subject to the rules set out in this document, the Panel may regulate their proceedings as they see fit.

Complaints proceeding to Stage 2 or 3 will be recorded noting at what stage the complaint has been resolved, the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint and whether or not the complaint was upheld.

Parents and prospective parents may request from the school details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except to the extent required by the Secretary of State and an inspection body under part 7, paragraph 33 (k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 and under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

*\*Exceptional circumstances such as absence during school holidays or through illness of key personnel may require resolution after 28 days.*