



SEVENOAKS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Status and Review Cycle	Statutory / Annual
Policy reviewed and amended	August 2024
Next review date	August 2025
Governor Lead	Mrs Jan Berry jan.berry@theprep.org.uk
Policy Holder	Mr Luke Harrison Luke.harrison@theprep.org.uk 01732 764829

Policy Statement

Sevenoaks Prep School recognises that parents will, from time to time, have concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school. For the purpose of our Complaints Policy and procedures the term 'parents' includes guardians. The procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered, and it does not cover exclusions.

This policy works in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy and the Whistleblowing Policy.

At Sevenoaks Prep School we:

- Take all concerns and complaints seriously.
- Make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of partnership.
- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the parent/complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- Resolve all Stage 1 complaints within 28 working term-time days of the complaint being received and acknowledged.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document.
- Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken.
- Ensure that no-one, including pupils, is penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all formal stage or panel hearings, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved.
- Review regularly at senior leadership level the written record of serious concerns or complaints and their outcomes.

Informal complaints (stage 1) relating to the Pre- Prep are recorded and kept by the Head of Pre-Prep. Informal complaints (stage 1) relating to Years 3-8 are recorded and kept by the Headmaster. The Head of Pre-Prep and Headmaster scrutinise and sign off their complaints record termly.

A record of formal complaints - and their outcomes - is kept by the PA to the Headmaster, Louise Madderson, in both electronic and hard copy in her office.

The record is reviewed regularly by the Headmaster.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2023-24) was two.

In the case of parents with pupils in the EYFS setting, should parents feel that the EYFS requirements have not been met in full, parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI/OFSTED if they so wish. Relevant contact details are set out below.

ISI:

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Phone: 020 77768849 or e-mail via the ISI website: info@isi.net

OFSTED:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M21 2WD

Phone: 0300 123 1231 or e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Please note that ISI can only assess whether a school is adequately following a complaints' procedure and cannot become involved in individual cases or investigate disputes about fees or complaints about pupils no longer at the school. Concerns may be copied by ISI to the Department for Education (DfE). Depending on the nature of the complaint, DfE may instruct ISI to visit the school.

DfE:

You can also contact the DfE directly as the authority responsible for the registration of independent schools. You should contact the DfE's independent schools' team on 0370 000 2288 or send an e-mail to registration.enquiries@education.gov.uk The address to write to is: *Department for Education Independent Education and Schools Safeguarding Division Level 3 Bishopsgate House Feethams Darlington DL1 5QE*

This policy is applicable to all pupils in our school including those in our EYFS setting. It is available to staff, pupils, and parents on the school's website and paper copies are available on request from the school office.

Concerns and Complaints Procedure

A vital aspect of working in a close partnership with parents is that we want to know when things are, in the view of parents, not going right. If you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's life at school, please contact an appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. We will take all such expressions of concern seriously and follow them up courteously and promptly.

Two things tend to make parents and pupils reluctant to express concerns:

- A fear that the School will not see the issue to be important. Please be assured, if it is important to you, it is important to us.
- A fear that a complaint may lead to repercussions for the pupil. Please be assured that under no circumstances will the School discriminate against a pupil because of expressions of concern or complaints.

We are also very experienced in ensuring that, if other pupils are involved (e.g. in an allegation of bullying), there are no repercussions from other quarters. For Stage 1 complaints, the School will in general share with relevant staff the substance of the complaint but not the name of the complainant.

Who should you contact? Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is to be hoped that most complaints can be made and considered on an informal basis.

- For a minor day to day issue please contact the relevant teacher or Form Tutor or class teacher.
- For a more serious subject-related academic concern, the Head of Department, or your child's assistant Head of Key Stage:
EYFS- Head of Early Years, Louisa Rowland
Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 – Assistant Head of Key Stage 1, Shannon Wake
Years 3-6 – Assistant Head of Key Stage 2, Robin Collings
Years 7 and 8 - Assistant Head of Key Stage 3, Clare Harrison
- For a more serious general academic concern or pastoral matter, the relevant Assistant Head of Key Stage is the appropriate person to contact.
- For concerns about the curriculum, please contact the Deputy Head
- For any other pastoral concerns, please contact relevant Assistant Head of Key Stage
- In matters regarding finance, fees and non-academic services please contact the Bursar (bursar@theprep.org.uk)
- In matters regarding after school care please contact the Deputy Head.

We will do all we can to ensure that we respond to serious concerns and complaints in a professional manner, ensuring that during any process all of the parties concerned – be they parents, pupils or school staff – remain fully supported and communicated with openly and in a timely manner. However, if you feel that an expression of concern has not been handled properly by a member of staff, please contact the Deputy Head / Head of Pre-Prep.

We keep a written record of every serious concern or complaint; this record will include the date on which the complaint was received and will be logged with the Head's PA. We will endeavour to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. In the event that the relevant staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint by writing directly to the Headmaster.

A complaint about the Headmaster should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

What to do if you remain dissatisfied?

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

If you remain unhappy, please contact the Headmaster in writing. Receipt will be acknowledged within 24 hours during term time and usually within five days during school holiday periods. The Headmaster (or delegated person) may ask to meet you for an initial discussion of the problem. Either in the first instance or in due course full written details of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details should be sent by email or hard copy. To assist the Headmaster further, parents should also indicate what they envisage as the desired outcome. The Headmaster will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to and/or meet with the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within 10 term-time working days of receiving and acknowledging the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Headmaster may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and/or may involve one or more of the Governors. Written records will be kept 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 his findings and decision in writing, within 28 term-time working days of the start of the stage 2 process. The Headmaster will give reasons for his decision.

Panel Hearing – Stage 3

If having discussed the matter with the Headmaster, you still feel dissatisfied then please contact the Chair of Governors who will convene a panel of at least two governors and one person independent of the management and running of the School to consider the complaint. No member of the panel may have had any direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. You can write to the Chair of Governors at jan.berry@theprep.org.uk who will acknowledge the request within 5 working days during term time. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

At the Panel Hearing, the complainant(s) may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative or friend. Legal representation will only be permitted if the Chair considers it appropriate. If it is considered appropriate the Chair will inform the complainant(s) to that effect so that they may choose to be legally represented at the Panel Hearing if they so wish. Should they decide to be so represented they shall inform the Chair at least seven days before the date set for the Panel Hearing that that is their intention. If the complainant(s) choose to be legally represented the Chair will notify the other parties of that decision to enable them to have legal representation at the Panel Hearing should they so wish.

Parents should ensure that they send the chair any relevant documents or paperwork that they wish to be considered with reference to the complaint, this should include copies of their original complaint to the Head.

It is important that any documents to be shared are sent in a timeframe which allows everyone the opportunity to review the papers before the panel hearing, this should not be any later than 3 working days prior to the hearing.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall forward within seven days of the meeting or Hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within seven days.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, Governors and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made, within seven days. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Guidance for parents and governors can be found in [the DfE's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures](#) (updated Jan 2021).

Records of complaints will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. The findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection by the Headmaster and Governors on the school premises.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Parents are always welcome to address their serious concerns on any matter to the Headmaster.