



# GATEHOUSE SCHOOL

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## **Introduction**

We believe that Gatehouse School provides a good education for all our children and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. In accordance with paragraph 33 of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 we are obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases and applies to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and before and after school activities.

## **Guiding Principles**

At Gatehouse School, we are committed to meeting the needs of our pupils. However, we recognise that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. The intention of this policy is to provide a clear and transparent process that will enable such complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately.

For the purposes of this policy, a 'parent' shall include a guardian, carer or any other person with parental responsibility for a child at the school. This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was on the school role.

This policy has been approved by the headteacher and Governors of the school and is available on the school's website or on request from the school office. It can be made available in large print or another more accessible format, if required. If assistance is needed with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, a parent should contact the School Business Manager who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

In this policy, all references to working days means Monday to Friday excluding weekends, school holidays and bank holidays.

This policy is applicable to parents or legal guardians of pupils currently attending Gatehouse School. It may also, at the discretion of the Headteacher, be used to deal with complaints from the parents of past pupils who have recently left the school.

## **Aims and objectives**

- To ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible.
- To ensure the approach is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote confidence in the school's provision for safeguarding and promotion of welfare.
- To seek to resolve every concern or complaint quickly and to correct any matter which may have gone wrong.
- To learn from complaints, including reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

## **The complaints procedure**

A three stage procedure exists for dealing with concerns and complaints. Most issues are resolved informally at Stage 1 and parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their child's class teacher or other relevant member of staff at the earliest opportunity. Parents should not feel there are barriers to expressing reasonable concerns.

In each stage of the procedure a timescale is quoted for handling the various stages. Wherever it is reasonable to do so, the school will do everything possible to ensure that these timescales are adhered to. However there may be occasions, such as during school holidays, where a particular member of staff is away from school for any reason or where other agencies are involved when timescales become extended. In such cases the parent will be kept informed of the progress being made.

If a complaint or concern is raised, at any stage, regarding a Safeguarding issue then this will immediately be passed to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mrs Fiona Tighe) and it will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy a copy of which can be downloaded from the school's website at:

<http://www.gatehouseschool.co.uk/about-us/school-policies/>

### **STAGE 1 - Informal Resolution**

- Concerns or complaints can be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If the matter has been raised by email or letter then receipt will normally be acknowledged by the school within two working days.
- Matters relating to the education or general welfare of a pupil should normally, in the first instance, be referred to the child's class teacher. Class teachers can be contacted via the school office. Matters relating to finance or administration should be referred to the Bursar.
- On occasion complaints may be passed to a member of the school's Senior Leadership team to deal with but still resolved informally.
- The school will normally resolve all complaints or concerns and report back to parents within ten working days. In practice many issues are resolved within a much quicker time scale.

### **STAGE 2 - Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parent at Stage 1 then the parent should put the complaint in writing either by letter or email, to the Headteacher. Receipt of the complaint will normally be acknowledged within two working days.
- In the event that the complaint is against the Headteacher then it should be sent to the Chair of Governors either by letter (care of the school) or by email to: [chair@gatehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:chair@gatehouseschool.co.uk). In such cases the procedures outlined below will be conducted by either The Chair of Governors or another Governor nominated by the Chair to conduct the investigation.
- In most cases the Headteacher will arrange to meet with complainants to discuss their concerns within five working days as part of the process of investigating the complaint.

- The Headteacher will investigate the matter thoroughly and speak to all other members of staff or individuals concerned as she deems to be appropriate. She will report her findings to the complainant, in writing, normally within 15 working days from the date of the complaint being progressed to stage 2. If the matter is complex then this timescale may be extended by the Head by up to a further 10 working days and the complainant will be notified of this.

### STAGE 3 - Review Panel Hearing

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 process then the complaint may be put before a review panel which will be established by the Chair of Governors.
- A request for a Review Panel Hearing should be made in writing, addressed to the Chair of Governors either by letter (care of the school) or by email to [chair@gatehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:chair@gatehouseschool.co.uk) Such a request shall be made within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome of the Stage 2 process. Requests for a panel hearing received after 10 working days will fall outside the scope of this policy but may still be accepted, at the discretion of the Chair of Governors, where there is justifiable reason for the delay.
- If a parent seeks to invoke Stage 3 the Chair of Governors will convene a panel comprising three persons who are not connected to the matter of the complaint and have had no prior involvement with the investigation of the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The date set for the hearing will normally be within 20 working days of the date the request is received by the Chair of Governors. At least 5 working days notice of the date of the hearing will be provided to the parent.
- The parent(s) may, if he/she/they wish(es), be accompanied at the hearing by a person of their choice. However, legal representation would not usually be considered appropriate.
- The panel has the scope to review the original complaint and the way it has been dealt with. New information which has not previously been brought to the school's attention would not normally be considered. The panel members will review all paperwork relating to the matter prior to the hearing and may, at its discretion conduct further investigation.
- The parent(s) will be notified in writing, within 5 working days of the hearing, of the panel's findings and of any recommendations made to the school. It should be noted that the panel's findings are not binding upon the school but serious consideration will be given to any recommendations made.
- The panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant/s, and where relevant, the person complained about, and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints for a minimum of three years; this will include a record of whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

### **Complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements**

Additional regulatory requirements apply to written complaints regarding the fulfilment of EYFS requirements. Specifically, the complainant will be notified of the outcome of any investigation by the school into their complaint within 28 days. The school's record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

In the event of dissatisfaction with the above actions, the complainant may refer the matter to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) or The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The contact details for these organisations are as follows:

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
0300 123 1231

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
CAP House  
9-12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA  
[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)  
[concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
0207 600 100

### **Written records**

A written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with either Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be kept by the school. This record will include:

- whether the complaint was resolved following the Stage 2 formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing; and
- what action has been taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

During the academic year 2020- 2021, the school dealt with 7 stage 1 complaints, and 2 stage 2 complaints, which escalated and were concluded at stage 3.

### **Confidentiality**

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State for Education or a body conducting an inspection under sections 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Parents are asked to respect the confidentiality of these processes, especially in respect of naming other children or information which could lead to the identification of other pupils

### **Monitoring and review**

The school's Senior Leadership Team will monitor and review concerns and complaints raised under Stage 1 on a regular basis.

Formal complaints raised under Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be reported on a termly basis to the governing body for review.

Additionally, the Chair of Governors and Headteacher monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. They examine this log on an annual basis.

This policy is approved by the governing body and reviewed by them on an annual basis.

### Other policies

From time to time issues raised under this policy may invoke procedures which are covered in other school policies, in particular the Anti Bullying Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. Both these policies can be downloaded from the school's website at: <http://www.gatehouseschool.co.uk/about-us/school-policies/>.

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| <b>Policy Name</b> | <b>Complaints</b>  | <b>updated</b>     | <b>February 2015</b><br>updated May 2017<br>updated Sep 2018<br>updated Oct 2021<br>updated 2023<br>updated 2024 |
| <b>Status</b>      | <b>Mandatory</b><br>ISI Handbook part 7,<br>ISSR para 33   | <b>last review</b> | <b>Reviewed Summer 2025</b>  |
|                    |  | <b>Next Review</b> | <b>Summer 2026</b>   |
| <b>Circulation</b> | <b>Governors / all staff / [volunteers]</b><br>automatically.<br>Parents on request.<br>Website. |                    |  |