



## Policy on the Handling of Complaints

**Any concern about the safety of a child should be notified immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and should be confirmed in writing to the Head.**

This policy applies to the Perse School (**the School**) which comprises the **Relevant Schools** (the Perse Pelican Nursery and Pre Preparatory School including the EYFS setting (**the Pelican School**), the Perse Preparatory School (**the Prep School**) and the Perse Upper School (**the Upper School**)).

**This policy has been authorised by the Governors and is available to parents on request and is published on the School website. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.**

If you require assistance with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, please contact the person identified in Annex 1 who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

### Introduction

- 1 **Policy status:** The policy has been approved by the Heads of the Upper School, the Prep School and the Pelican School and the Governing Body of the Perse School. It takes account of paragraph 33 of the *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3283)* and the requirements of the *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework*. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.
- 2 **Application:** This policy applies to complaints arising other than if the Head has permanently excluded or asked a pupil to leave and the parents seek a Governors' Review of that decision where separate procedures apply.
- 3 **The Head:** References to "the Head" in this policy means the Head of the Relevant School.
- 4 **This Policy applies** to complaints from parents of current pupils and parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

- 5 **Three Stages:** This policy describes a three stage procedure -
- Stage 1** - Informal resolution of a complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff.
  - Stage 2** - A formal complaint in writing to the Head.
  - Stage 3** - A reference to the Complaints Panel.
- 6 **Timescales:** Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. References to "working days" mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.
- a. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.
  - b. The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible.
  - c. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the School will notify the parents and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

### **Policy Aim and Statement**

- 7 **Aim:** The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, is fair to those concerned and helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in the School's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The School will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing its systems and procedures in light of those circumstances.
- 8 **Policy Statement:** The School needs to know **as soon as possible** if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. It recognises that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, and can be damaging to relationships and also to the School culture. Parents and pupils should never feel - nor should there ever be any suggestion made - that a genuine complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at the School.

### **Management of Complaints**

#### **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

- 9 **Complaints:** The School expects that most complaints can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. Complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are taken very seriously and may need to be dealt with at Stage 2 without action at Stage 1.

- 10 **Notification:** Informal complaints should be raised initially as follows –
- 10.1 **Curriculum issues** - if the matter relates to the curriculum, please speak or write to:  
Upper School: the Tutor, Head of Department or Deputy Head (Curriculum).  
Prep School: the Form Teacher or Assistant Head (Academic).  
Pelican School: the Class Teacher.
- 10.2 **Pastoral care** - for complaints relating to pastoral issues, please speak or write to:  
Upper School: the Tutor, Head of Year, Head of Section, or the Deputy Head (Pupils).  
Prep School: the Form Teacher or the Head of Year or the Assistant Head (Pastoral).  
Pelican School: the Class Teacher.
- 10.3 **Staff Issues** – for complaints relating to members of the teaching staff, please speak or write to:  
Upper School: the Tutor, Head of Department, or the Deputy Head (Staff).  
Prep School: the Head.  
Pelican School: the Head.
- 10.4 **Disciplinary matters** - a complaint over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with:  
Upper School; the Head of Year, Head of Section or Deputy Head (Pupils).  
Prep School: the Deputy Head or the Head.  
Pelican School: the Head.
- 10.5 **Financial matters** - a complaint relating to fees or extras should be stated in writing to the Deputy Bursar.
- 11 **Acknowledgement:** The School will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt . A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing.
- 12 **Unresolved Informal Complaints:** The School aims to resolve any informal complaint with 15 working days of receipt. A parent who is dissatisfied with the response to any informal complaint should put the complaint in writing in accordance with the procedure sent out in Stage 2 below.
- 13 **Complaints about the Head:** The procedure for dealing with a complaint about the Head of the Relevant School is set out below:
- 13.1 Parents may choose to raise complaints directly with the Relevant Head if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing – if in writing, the School will

not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Relevant Head will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1.

- 13.2 The Relevant Head will acknowledge informal complaints within three working days of receipt and will seek to resolve the matter under Stage 1 by means of direct conversation or a meeting with the parents, to be held if possible within 15 working days of receipt of the initial complaint.
- 13.3 If the parent is dissatisfied with the Relevant Head's response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this policy.

## **Stage 2 - Formal Complaint**

- 14 **Notification:** An unresolved informal complaint under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or any dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing on the Complaints Form for the Relevant School which can be requested from the Head's office or downloaded from the School's [website](#). Full details including the outcome sought, all relevant documents, and full contact details should be included on the complaints form, which should be returned in an envelope addressed to the Head of the Relevant School. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within two working days of receipt, identifying the Complaints Coordinator appointed by the Head of the Relevant School, and indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.
- 15 **Complaints Coordinator:** On receipt of a formal complaint, the Head (or Chairman of Governors if the complaint is about the Head of the Upper School) will appoint a senior member of staff to act as the Complaints Coordinator who will be responsible for investigating and resolving the complaint. The main responsibilities of the Complaints Coordinator are to -
  - 14.1 Be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved.
  - 14.2 Co-ordinate the complaints procedures in the School.
  - 14.3 Arrange assistance for parents who require this, for example, because of a disability.
  - 14.4 Maintain an appropriate training programme for all employees of the School in relation to complaints.
  - 14.5 Monitor the maintenance, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints.
  - 14.6 Report regularly to the Head (or, if the complaint is about the Head, to the Chair of Governors) with respect to complaints.
- 16 **Investigation:** The Complaints Coordinator will investigate the complaint. They may request additional information from the complainant and will probably wish to speak to the complainant and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Head or Chairman of Governors who will reach a decision and notify the complainant by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter of the decision and the reasons for it. The Head or Chairman of Governors will aim to inform the complainant within 28 working days from the receipt of the complaint of the outcome of the investigation although complaints received within one month of the end of term or during half term are

likely to take longer to resolve owing to the school holidays and the unavailability of personnel. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and complainants notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the School having received the complaint. Complaints made during school holidays should be sent to the Head of the Upper School.

**17 Complaints about the Head:** The procedure for dealing with a complaint about the Head of the Relevant School is set out below:

17.1 A complaint about the Head of the Prep School or the Head of the Pelican School should be put in writing to the Head of the Upper School. A complaint about the Head of the Upper School should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors). The written complaint should include a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details of the complainant and details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired.

17.2 The Head of the Upper School or Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors), as appropriate, will acknowledge the complaint by telephone, email or letter within three working days of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and/or meeting with the parent. The parent will receive a response to the complaint within 15 working days.

17.3 If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel under Stage 3 of this policy.

### **Stage 3 - Reference to the Complaints Panel**

**18 Composition:** The School has constituted a Complaints Panel ("Panel") comprising School Governor members and members who are independent of the governance, management and running of the School.

**19 The Panel Hearing:** A Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Head or Chairman of Governors not a full repeat of the investigative process. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

**20 The role of the Panel:** the Panel's task is to establish the circumstances surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

- the documents provided by both parties and
- any representations made by the complainant or the Head or Chairman of Governors.

If, after establishing the circumstances, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make

recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head or to the full body of Governors as appropriate.

- 21 **Notification:** Requests for a hearing before the Complaints Panel must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors. . Parents should make the request within seven working days of the decision complained of. The request will only be considered if the complainant has completed the procedures at Stages 1 and/or 2. The complainant must ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and their full contact details accompany the letter to the Clerk. The letter must state the outcome that the complainant desires and all the grounds of their complaint and must be accompanied by a list of the documents which the complainant believes to be in the School's possession and wishes the Panel to see. The Clerk will acknowledge the request in writing within four working days. If the complainant requires assistance with their request, for example, because of a disability, they should contact the Clerk who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- 22 **Convening the Panel:** The Clerk to the Governors will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during half term or school holidays. The Panel will consist normally of **at least three individuals** who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be **independent of the management and running of the school**. The complainant may ask the Clerk to be informed of the identities of the members of the Panel.
- 23 **Notice of hearing:** Every effort will be made to enable the Panel hearing to take place within 15 working days of the receipt of the request. As soon as reasonably practical and in any event, at least five working days before the hearing, the Clerk will send the Complainant written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present.
- 24 **Attendance:** The complainant will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, or friend. If that person is legally qualified s/he may attend only with the prior permission of the Chairman of the Panel; their role will be limited to providing advice to the parents if a point of law arises and they will not be permitted to act as an advocate as the hearing is not a legal proceeding. This person will not be permitted to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel. Copies of additional documents the complainant wishes the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk at least **seven working days** prior to the hearing.
- 25 **Chairman:** The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner (and accordingly it would be exceptional for the chairman to permit the Complainant to be accompanied by a lawyer acting in his/her professional capacity).
- 26 **Hearing:** All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Chairman may direct, with the consent of all those present, that the hearing is tape recorded to assist accurate recollection for purposes of the decision. The Panel will be under no obligation to retain tapes thereafter. The Clerk will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings in any event.
- 27 **Evidence:** The Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that the parties have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be

under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. All statements made or used at the hearing will be unsworn. A bundle of documents to be considered by the Panel will be circulated to the parties at least **three working days** prior to the hearing.

- 28 **Conduct:** All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Panel. If terminated by reason of the conduct of the complainant, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.
- 29 **Adjournment:** The Panel may at its discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.
- 30 **Private proceeding:** A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be disclosed directly or indirectly to the press or other media.
- 31 **Decision:** After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, or in the event that a hearing cannot be properly conducted by reason of the conduct of a complainant, the Panel shall reach a Decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel's decision may be sent by electronic email and subsequently shall be confirmed in writing to the Complainant within seven working days. Reasons for the Decision will be given. The Decision may include recommendations and will be sent to the Complainant, the Chairman of the Governing Body, the Head and, where relevant, any person, or parent of a pupil about whom the complaint has been made. It will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Head and the Governing Body. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

Parents can make a complaint to the ISI (or OFSTED in the case of a complaint concerning the EYFS setting) should they wish to do so and the contact details are set out below:

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA  
Telephone: 020 7600 0100  
Fax: 020 7776 8849

concerns@isi.net.

**OFSTED**

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Ofsted's helpline is 0300 1234666, textphone 0161 618 8524 (EYFS) or e-mail [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

- 32 **Confidentiality:** The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints including whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or 3 and the action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether or not it was upheld). Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by section 108 or 109 of the

*Education and Skills Act 2008* (paragraph 33(k) to the *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3283)*), that is, where access is required by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of a School's inspection or under other legal authority. Records of complaints relating to the EYFS setting will be made available to Ofsted and the ISI on request. Details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

- 33 **Complaints:** The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year was one.

<b>Authorised by</b>	Sir David Wright On behalf of the Board of Governors
<b>Date</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> September 2017

<b>Date of next review</b>	September 2018
<b>Circulation</b>	Governors / teaching staff / support staff / parents / pupils [on request] Published on the School's website and available from the School Office on request
<b>Status</b>	Complies with the <b>Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (SI2014/3283)</b>



**The Perse School**  
**Policy on the handling of complaints**  
**Annex – Assistance with making a complaint**

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**The following members of staff can assist with making of a complaint if required:**

**The Perse Pelican Nursery and Pre-Preparatory School:**

Sarah Waddington (Head), tel 01223 403940, (e-mail) [pelican@perse.co.uk](mailto:pelican@perse.co.uk)

If she is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, please contact the Deputy Head of the Pelican School for assistance.

**The Perse Preparatory School:**

James Piper (Head), tel 01223 403992, (e-mail) [prephmsec@perse.co.uk](mailto:prephmsec@perse.co.uk)

If the Head is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, please contact the Deputy Head of the Prep School for assistance.

**The Perse Upper School:**

Edward Wiseman (Deputy Head, Pupils), tel 01223 403800, (e-mail) [ewwiseman@perse.co.uk](mailto:ewwiseman@perse.co.uk)

If he is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, please contact the Head for assistance.