



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Including all of the Pre-Prep Department and Early Years Foundation Stage

DJCF

Updated September 2024

Review and Amendment Record

Date	Person Conducting the Review	Changes Made
6/9/17	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in academic year 2016/17
1/11/17	DJCF	
11/10/18	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2017/18 and include EYFS
18/9/19	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2018/19
19/10/20	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2019/20 (none)
1/9/21	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2020/21 (none)
5/9/22	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2021/22 (none) Change to numbering of updated NMS for Boarding
1/9/23	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2022/23 (none)
1/9/24	DJCF	Update formal complaints made in 2023/24 (none)

Introduction

The 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 or concern, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure.

This Complaints Procedure is made available to all parents of pupils on the Policies page of the school's website, (www.summerfields.com/Policies). It is also available on request from the School Office (schooloffice@summerfields.com) either electronically or in printed form.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department, about the provision of boarding 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 acted unfairly.

Making a Complaint

There are three stages in this Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- All complaints and concerns will be addressed promptly and it is hoped that most will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally, in the first instance, contact their son's Form Teacher, Tutor or Lodgeparent. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If the Form Teacher, Tutor or Lodgeparent cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult with, or pass the matter on to, the member of staff best placed to deal with the complaint. This may be a Head of Department, Head of Year, the Head of Boarding or the Deputy Headmaster.
- **Complaints about the provision of boarding** should be made initially to the Lodgeparent and, if not resolved, then to the Head of Boarding.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year, the Head of Boarding, the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster will usually be referred initially to the relevant Form Teacher, Tutor or Lodgeparent unless the Head of Department, Head of Year, Head of Boarding, Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him or her to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution,

then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors, whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.
- An appropriate record of informal complaints and concerns, and the date on which they were made, will be recorded on a central template. In the case of complaints about boarding provision, a separate record will be kept in the relevant Lodge diary. In all cases, central records will be held by the Deputy Headmaster.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should then put a formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet with or speak to the parents concerned as soon as possible, and within five working 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 Headmaster, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in seven working days.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and of whether it is resolved at this stage or proceeds to a panel hearing.
- 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 the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- This written decision should be issued within fourteen working days of the Headmaster receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headmaster will write to the parents within the fourteen-day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he is unable to issue his decision and informing the parents when he will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of the original receipt of the complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this Procedure (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they are to write to the Headmaster informing him of their decision to do so within 28 days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a named Governor who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of Summer Fields.
- Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the nominated Governor, on behalf of the Board of Governors.
- The named Governor will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within fourteen days.
- If the named Governor and/or the members of the Panel deem it necessary, they 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 all parties not later than five working days before the hearing. Any further particulars received before the hearing shall be considered and circulated prior to the meeting.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- However, should the Panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. Such investigations will take place within ten working days.
- The Panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within ten days of the hearing.
- 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 in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy will be held at the school and made available for inspection by the Chairman of Governors and Headmaster at any time.

Recording Complaints

In accordance with Regulation Part 7, paragraph 33(j), the school will keep a written record of all formal written complaints, and whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3 of this Procedure, and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld). The records will be kept for six years after the date of the resolution of the complaint.

Under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS14), the school will record if the complaint is related to the provision of boarding.

The record will also include:

- Date when the issue was raised.
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil.
- Description of this issue.
- Records of all investigations (if appropriate).
- Witness statements (if appropriate).
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage.
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of telephone conversations).
- A clear account of what action was taken as a result of the complaint.

Pre-Prep and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Operating as a single school, Summer Fields also has a Pre-Prep department which caters for the education of boys aged 4 to 7. The EYFS caters specifically for those four-year-olds in the Reception class. Parents who may wish to make a formal complaint in connection with any aspect of welfare, health and safety, or any wider educational issue within the EYFS provision should do so following this policy and procedure. Details of any formal complaint made will be kept on record for three years. Parents will be notified of the outcome of any investigation within 28 days after receipt of their complaint by the school. The written records of complaints for EYFS, including any action taken, will be made available to Ofsted and/or ISI on request.

If a parent remains unhappy following a complaint about the EYFS, they may make a complaint to Ofsted at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD; telephone 0300 123 4666; email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; web <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Confidentiality

- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Complaints

- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. No one is penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Parents and pupils (including boarders in relation to welfare and boarding provision) who feel that their complaint has not been answered by the school's normal procedures can contact ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate), CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 0207 600 0100; email info@isi.net; web <https://www.isi.net/parents-and-pupils/concerns-about-a-school>

There were no formal complaints received during the academic year 2023/24.