

MANDER PORTMAN WOODWARD (MPW) COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

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. We 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 our systems and procedures in the light of the circumstances.

“Parent/s” includes a current or prospective parent or legal guardian or education guardian or a pupil aged 16+, and may at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the college.

If parents have a complaint, they may expect it to be treated by the college in accordance with the four-stage procedure outlined below.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Personal Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Personal Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Vice Principal or Principal.
- Complaints made directly to a member of staff other than the student's Personal Tutor will usually be referred to the Personal Tutor unless a Vice Principal or Principal deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Personal Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and subsequently where relevant, details of the resolution reached. Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days or in the event that the Personal Tutor and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents 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 parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal along with any evidential substantiation if appropriate. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, either orally or in writing, normally within five working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely time scale. In most cases, the Principal will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations and to request further information from any party.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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 this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.

Stage 3 – Reference to the Managing Director of MPW Ltd

- If parents are dissatisfied with the Principal's decision under **Stage 2** (above), or if the complaint is against the Principal, the complaint should be referred in writing to the Managing Director of MPW Ltd. If the Principal is in receipt of the original complaint, he will refer it to the Managing Director in such cases.
- The Managing Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, normally within seven working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely time scale.
- The Managing Director will arrange for the complaint to be considered following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2 (above). When he is satisfied that he has established all the material facts, so far as is practicable, he will notify parents in writing of his decision and the reasons for it.

Stage 4 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 4 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must write to the Managing Director requesting a hearing before the Complaints Panel. The request will only be considered if the procedures at **Stages 1-3** have been completed. Parents must state in their letter the outcome desired and all the grounds of the complaint. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the college's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see.
- The Managing Director will acknowledge the request normally within five working days of receiving it and schedule a hearing before the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days thereafter.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons, comprising members of the board of directors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint and at least one member who is independent of the management and governance of the college.
- The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner.

- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they so wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Chairman may direct 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. A handwritten minute of the hearing will be taken in any event.
- The Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present 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 those attending the hearing will be expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comments will be minuted.
- If further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five working 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 Principal and, where relevant, the person complained of.
- Number of formal complaints registered in previous academic year: zero.

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 is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Written records (available on request) will contain an indication whether complaints were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

(October 2009)