

The Croft Preparatory School Complaints Procedure

Whole School Policy, including Early Years Foundation Stage

Procedure reviewed (MC)	22 July 2024
Peer Review completed	13 September 2024
Ratified by SLT	17 September 2024
Next review Date	September 2025

The legal responsibility for ensuring that the Croft Preparatory School adheres to all relevant statutory regulations, as issued by the DfE, lies with the Proprietors. At their discretion, the Proprietors may delegate the monitoring of the efficacy with which the school discharges its statutory duties to the Board and the Governing Committee.

Notwithstanding the above delegation, the Proprietors retain ultimate responsibility for how the statutory functions are executed.

Introduction

The Croft Preparatory School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be dealt with by the School in accordance with this procedure, which is freely available on the school website.

The School's definition of a complaint (based on the Independent School Inspectorate's interpretation) is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

The Complaints Procedure only applies to parents of current pupils. It does not apply to parents of prospective pupils, nor does it apply to past pupils, unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

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 child's Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Senior Deputy Headmaster (Prep and Pre-Prep), a Deputy Head (Pupil Welfare and Safeguarding or Pupil Achievement) or the Early Years Manager, as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Senior Deputy Headmaster, a Deputy Head or the Early Years Manager, will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Line Manager concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event, the Line Manager will attempt to resolve the matter in five working days, or as soon as is practicable.
- The relevant member of staff will complete a 'Parent Meeting/Email (STAGE 1)' form on the school's online management system, Engage. The date on which it was received should be recorded. The Deputy Head (Pupil, Welfare and Safeguarding) will record all Stage 1 concerns on a whole school overview document. Should the matter not be resolved within five working

days, or in the event that the relevant teacher 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. It will be recorded on the Stage 1 concern form that it is being escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents will be asked to put their 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/speak to parents concerned, within 2 working days, of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Please refer to the section on ‘Complaints Made Outside of School Term Time’ in this policy for guidance on complaints made outside of term time.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in 7 working days, or as soon as is practicable.
- The Headmaster will keep records of complaints by completing a ‘Formal Complaint (STAGE 2)’ document of the school’s online management system, Engage. This is fully confidential and only shared with the appropriate staff.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- The written decision will be issued within 14 working days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headmaster will write to the parents within the 14 working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he is unable to issue a decision and informing the parents when he will do so, which will be within 28 working days of receipt of the complaint in any event. *(NB: Where the complaint relates to the fulfilment of EYFS requirements, the outcome will be notified within 28 days of receiving the complaint.)*
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to involve Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Headmaster informing him of their decision to do so within 7 working days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the School’s Proprietors.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one Panel Member shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The independent panel member will hold, or have previously held, a position of responsibility and be able to scrutinise evidence and articulate a balanced argument.

- The complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the Panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable, and within 14 working days.
- If the conveyor of the Panel and/or the Panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days before the hearing. Particulars received after this deadline may unfortunately be inadmissible.
- 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. In the event that the parent does not wish to attend, the hearing will still proceed in their absence.
- In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.
- In the event of a Panel Hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representation to the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However, should the Panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the Panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. 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 14 working days of the panel hearing wherever possible, but within 28 working days of the panel hearing in any event, unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the Headmaster, Proprietor, Governing Committee, the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- The findings, key dates and 'action' will be recorded on a 'Formal Complaint (STAGE 3)' form on the school's online management system Engage

Working Days

- Where the term 'working days' are referenced in this policy, it refers to weekdays within the school term time.

Written Records

- Provision will be made for a written record to be kept of all complaints made in writing under the formal part of the procedure, and of whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. This Complaints Log is held by the Headmaster and will also detail any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, whether or not the complaint was upheld.

- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept securely and confidentially, in line with the School's obligations under the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- Written records of complaints will be retained for a minimum of 7 years, as advised by the DfE. Records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Complaints Concerning Exclusions

- Please refer to the school's 'Good Behaviour Policy' for specific information about exclusion type and severity
- If a complaint or appeal were made following a pupil exclusion, then the school would implement the steps outlined in the Complaints Procedure.

Complaints Made Outside of School Term Time

- Where a complaint is made outside of term time, the parent should either send the complaint via email to the school office or via post to the school address marked for the attention of the Headmaster.
- A receipt would be sent to the parent with clear guidance of the time frame within which the complaint would be addressed.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- In addition to the three-stage process outlined above, parents may make a complaint to Ofsted and/or ISI, in respect of the School's EYFS provision, should they wish to do so. The contact details are noted below.
- Where a written complaint relates to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, the complaint will be investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint.
- A record of any complaint in respect of the EYFS will be kept for at least three years.
- The School will provide Ofsted and ISI with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of the complaint, on request.

Contact Details

Ofsted Piccadilly Gate	Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) CAP House
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Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Telephone: 0300 123 1231 (enquiries) 0300 123 4666 (complaints)	9-12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA Telephone: 020 7600 0100
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Vexatious Complaints

Where the School considers the complainant to have behaved in an unreasonable or vexatious manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns, the School may take further action in order to protect its employees.