COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE & POLICY (PARENTAL)

This procedure and policy is written in accordance with:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 as amended by the Independent Education Provisions in England (Inspection Fees) (as amended) and Independent School Standards (Amendments) 2018 ("ISS Regulations")
- ISI Inspection Framework (Framework 23, as amended).
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Group and school-based providers), DfE (effective 1 September 2026)
- The Independent School Standards: Guidance for Independent Schools, DfE (April 2026)
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, May 2026
- Data Protection Act 2018 (Section 164A), updated June 2026
- Queen Mary's School Parent Contract

Queen Mary's School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Overview

Queen Mary's 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, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and

in accordance with this Complaints Procedure / Policy, act with integrity and act justly and compassionately in handling any complaints from parents of pupils. The School recognises that, "Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is now a complaint, and in the scope of the Procedure / Policy, whatever the school labels it as".

Queen Mary's makes its Complaints Procedure / Policy available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website. Queen Mary's will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available, of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures.

Queen Mary's School takes informal concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, this Complaints Procedure should be followed.

This Procedure is applicable only to parents of pupils who are currently on the School's roll (and not to parents of prospective pupils). The only exception to this is that complaints made by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Procedure if the complaint was initially raised when the relevant pupil was still registered as a pupil at the School. Lodging a complaint—especially a retrospective one—does not give parents the right to withhold fees, notice fees, or any other outstanding balances.

The Complaints Procedure cannot be used to bypass or delay contractual financial obligations. Belated complaints will not retroactively invalidate fee liabilities.

Complaints about the Head or Governing body

If the subject of the complaint is the Head, a member of the governing body or the entire governing body, it may be necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published Complaints Procedure. Complaints concerning the Head or a member of the governing body should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, who will decide on the suitability of the Complaints Policy in dealing with the complaint. When the entire governing body is the subject of the complaint, this should be pursued with Mr John Sherratt, Administrator for the Woodard Corporation, by emailing: johnsherratt@woodard.co.uk

The School aims to deal quickly and effectively with all complaints. Parents who make a complaint can expect to receive acknowledgement of their complaint within 24 hours during term time and within 7 working days during the holidays. Queen Mary's School will, where possible, aim to address a complaint and have the matter resolved within 10 working days.

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 or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. 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 has acted unfairly.

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.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Complaints to be considered on an informal basis

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher/Tutor by email, by phone or when in school. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the appropriate member of the Leadership Team. A dated record of the complaint and action taken should be sent to the Head and a copy kept in the Informal Complaints file.
- Complaints made directly may be referred to the relevant subject teacher or it may be appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. The person dealing with the complaint will keep a dated, written record of the complaint and action taken to resolve the matter. The pupil's Tutor should be informed and, as above, a dated record of the complaint and action taken should be sent to the Head and a copy put in the Informal Complaints file.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days, or in the event of the person dealing with the complaint and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents may proceed to the first formal stage of the Complaints Procedure/Policy (Stage 2).

Stage 2: Formal stage of the Complaints Procedure/Policy

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis with the Tutor, Subject Teacher or member of Senior Leadership, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 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 Head to ask a senior member of staff to carry out further investigations.
- After considering the complaint, the Head may also decide to delegate the matter back down to Stage One of the process and for the respective members of staff to follow the procedure as specified above in Stage One.
- The Head/Senior Leadership will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and evaluated, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are not satisfied with the Head's decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure/Policy, unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. Stage 3 should be a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a judicial review-style check that process was followed. Panels should have clear terms of reference, a clear process, and a direction to reach a final decision within a specified timescale.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.
- The Chair of Governors, or a designated Governor on his/her behalf, will appoint all Panel members. The Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.
- A complainant is allowed to attend the Panel Hearing and be accompanied if they wish. The right to request and attend a Panel is not forfeit because they have threatened or initiated legal proceedings.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
    - o dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
    - o uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
    - o make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Complaints in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Queen Mary's School will adhere to the DfE Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*.

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Records of complaints will be held in the central Complaints File, with a separate section for Early Years. Complaints should be communicated with the Nursery Practitioner, Key Worker or Nursery Manager as the first point of contact. A written record should be sent to the Head and logged in the Complaints File. Parents should follow the Complaints Procedure as set out in this document.

Queen Mary's will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

- Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net. ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

**DfE: Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: 1 September 2026*

Recording Complaints and use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing

(Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice: queenmarys.org/privacy-policy/. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Complaints by Boarders / Boarding Complaints Procedure

Parental complaints relating to boarding fall under the scope of this Complaints Policy.

However, as per Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding, boarders have a clear and accessible process to raise their own complaints about boarding provision, as well as information about how the school will respond to complaints. Boarders are not penalised for raising a complaint in good faith (14.2 NMSB).

The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The school keeps a record of complaints made but later withdrawn. The school should keep under review any emerging patterns arising from complaints (14.3 NMSB).

The procedure for complaints: Boarders can communicate a complaint in a variety of ways: to boarding staff, to the Head of Boarding, to the Boarding Captain, in the Suggestions Boxes, to their Form Tutor, to Senior Leadership, and if the complaint involves the Head, to the Chair of Governors. Boarders can also bring complaints to the School Council or to whole Boarding meetings.

Any complaints are logged and addressed, with pupils kept aware of what is happening. The Head of Boarding keeps records of complaints and action taken which is shared with boarding staff where appropriate via weekly meetings. A copy should be sent to the Head and recorded in the central Complaints File under the Boarder Complaints section.

Persistent correspondence

The School aims to handle all concerns and complaints fairly, transparently, and with mutual respect. However, where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same or substantially the same complaint after it has been fully considered through the appropriate stages of this procedure, the School will regard the complaint as serial or vexatious and it will be deemed outside the scope of this policy.

The School will not tolerate communication that is malicious, aggressive, abusive, or designed to cause disruption or distress to staff. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of offensive language, persistent or high-volume correspondence across any media, targeted personal attacks, or the publication of defamatory information regarding the School or its staff on social media platforms.

Unreasonable and malicious communication constitutes a material breach of the Parent Contract and the Parent Code of Conduct. In such circumstances, the School reserves the right to manage or restrict the parent's interaction with the School. This may include implementing a Communication Plan (such as restricting communication to a single point of contact or designated email address), restricting access to the School premises, or, in severe or persistent cases, terminating the Parent Contract and requiring the immediate withdrawal of the pupil from the School.

Data Protection, Confidentiality, and Retention

All personal data processed by the School in connection with a concern or complaint will be handled strictly in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice and current data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. In accordance with the School's Data Retention Guidelines, records of complaints are securely retained separately from the pupil's main educational record and are held only for as long as necessary to clear legal or regulatory obligations.

Separate Procedure for Data Protection Complaints

Please note that complaints specifically regarding the School's handling of personal data (such as information security, data sharing, or the handling of a Subject Access Request) are subject to a separate statutory regime under Section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018. Such matters do not follow the three-stage parental complaints procedure outlined in this document. If you wish to raise a formal data protection complaint, it will be facilitated by the School's Bursar and the Data Protection Lead (the IT Manager), acknowledged within 30 days of receipt, and investigated without undue delay. Complainants also retain the right to escalate data protection disputes directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

For the academic year 2025-2026, the School received:

Formal complaints: 3

Outcome: All resolved

Responsibility:	Updated:	Review:
Mrs Fe Beadnell Headmistress	September 2026	September 2027