

Complaints Procedure

2026-2027

Reviewed by Steve Boyes: 5 July 2026

Approved by the CSC: 1 September 2026

Next review: June 2027

Introduction

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that a complaint is managed fairly, sensitively, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way. Where the college is at fault, we will aim to put things right and, where necessary, review our systems and procedures in the light of the circumstances.

This policy has been approved by MPW's Board of Governors and is available to parents on the college website or on request from Laura Detheridge (laura.detheridge@mpw.ac.uk). It can be made available in large print or another more accessible format if required. If assistance is needed with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, a parent should contact Laura Detheridge, who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the college's responsibilities under:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- Equality Act 2010

Scope and application

This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or lack of action, by MPW where a parent seeks action by the college.

This policy applies to complaints made by parents of current students and by parents of former students where the complaint was first raised whilst the student was on the college roll. For the purposes of this policy, the term parent includes a guardian or any other person with parental responsibility for a student at the college.

The college has separate Grievance and Whistleblowing Policies for concerns raised by members of staff. Complaints from other individuals, including members of the public, should in the first instance be addressed to the Principal.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a safeguarding or child protection issue (see the college's Safeguarding Policy) or if the Principal expels or asks a student to leave and the parents seek a Governors' Review of that decision. The college will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

Where a complaint raises issues relating to data protection compliance, MPW will exercise reasonable judgement in determining whether the complaint is more appropriately dealt with under this policy or under the college's separate data protection complaints procedure. In doing so, the college will consider the substance of the complaint as a whole, including whether the data protection element forms part of a broader concern.

The complaints procedure will consider the substance of a complaint, but it does not provide a route for determining legal claims or awarding compensation, damages or fee refunds.

Although the college will manage complaints as openly and transparently as possible, there may be circumstances in which it cannot share full details of how a complaint has been handled, the evidence considered, the steps taken in response or other related matters. This may be the case even where a complaint is upheld, for example because the information concerns a third party, is subject to legal or regulatory restrictions, or cannot be disclosed in accordance with instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive.

Time scales

The college aims to resolve complaints promptly and encourages parents to raise concerns as soon as possible. Where practicable, complaints should be submitted within three months of the incident or, where a series of related incidents has occurred, within three months of the last incident. Complaints made after this period may still be considered, although the college's ability to investigate fully and fairly becomes increasingly difficult as time elapses. A complaint raised after three months should therefore include details of the issues which led to the delay.

The time scales for each stage of the complaints procedure are set out below. References to working days mean Monday to Friday during term time when the college is open. Term dates are published on the college's website. Complaints received during holiday periods will be acknowledged and progressed as soon as reasonably practicable, although resolution may take longer due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Where an extension to the published time scales is necessary, including where exceptional circumstances arise or another body is investigating aspects of the complaint, the college will inform the complainant of the revised time scales and the reasons for the delay as soon as possible.

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

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that all complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should 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 them to consult with a Vice 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 the Principal considers it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- Personal Tutors will make a written record of all complaints and concerns, the date on which they were received and any action taken by the college as a result. These records are monitored by the Principal.
- A complaint which has not been resolved by informal means to the parents' satisfaction within **10 working days** should be notified to the college in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.
- If the complaint concerns the Principal, parents are encouraged, where appropriate, to raise the matter directly with the Principal for informal resolution under Stage 1. Alternatively, parents may submit the complaint to the Chair of Governors, in which case it will be treated as a formal complaint and considered under Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Complaints will normally progress to Stage 2 only after they have been considered under Stage 1 and the parent has indicated that they wish to escalate the matter. Where a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the parent should submit the complaint in writing to the Principal, preferably using the attached pro forma (Appendix 1), within 15 working days of receiving the Stage 1 response, stating that they wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

- The written complaint submitted to the Principal should include the complainant's name and full contact details, the nature of the complaint and the person to whom it was previously raised, copies of any relevant documents, and the outcome sought.

- The Principal will acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint within five working days. 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 or a senior member of staff to carry out further investigations and to request further information from any party. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. Where this investigation is delegated, the investigator will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Principal before reaching a final decision. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised in accordance with data protection principles.
- 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 **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. The Principal will give reasons for the decision reached. Where appropriate, the Principal will include details of the action the college will take to resolve the complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Alternative procedure for handling complaints about the Principal

The procedure for dealing with a complaint about the Principal of the college is set out below:

- The complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors, Steve Boyes, at the college address (16-18 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3AU) or by email to steve.boyes@mpw.ac.uk. The complaint should include the same information as required for other Stage 2 complaints.
- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint within five working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and/or a meeting with the parents. The parents will receive a response to the complaint **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.
- If the parents are dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, they can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel under Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- If the parents are not satisfied with the Principal's response to their formal complaint, they may request a hearing before the Complaints Panel. The Panel Hearing will be a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a review of the procedure followed at Stage 2.
- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must write to the Chair of Governors requesting a hearing before the Complaints Panel. It is expected that the complaint will progress in a timely manner and parents should make the request within 10 working days of the decision complained about. The Panel will not consider new complaints at this stage, but may consider further evidence where it is relevant to the complaint already raised.
- Parents must state in their written submission all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome they are seeking. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the college's possession that they consider relevant to the matter and that they wish the Panel to see.
- Once requested, a Panel Hearing will take place unless the parents later indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. The Panel Hearing will, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parents may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel will consider the parents' complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel Hearing to proceed will not prevent the college from accommodating parental availability or considering comments concerning the Panel's composition.
- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the request within five working days of receiving it and schedule a hearing before the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and **within 20 working days** thereafter.

- The Panel will consist of at least three people, comprising members of the MPW Governing Body who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint and at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the college. The parent is entitled to know who has been appointed to sit on the Panel before the hearing and fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular member of the Panel.
- The role of the Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
 - the documents provided by both parties; and
 - any representations made by the parents and the Principal.

The Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether each complaint is upheld in whole or in part. The Panel has no power to make a financial award or to impose sanctions on staff, students or parents, although it may make recommendations where appropriate.

- The hearing will be chaired by a member of the Panel selected by the Panel 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 Panel Chair will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Panel to all parties at least three working days prior to the hearing.
- Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person, such as a relative or friend. As the hearing is not a legal proceeding, legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If the parents wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, the college must be notified at least seven working days before the hearing. Parents should note that the Panel will wish to speak to them directly and that the accompanying person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Panel Chair.
- 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 Panel Chair may direct that the hearing is recorded to assist accurate recollection for the purposes of the decision. The Panel will be under no obligation to retain recordings thereafter. A note-taker will attend the hearing to take notes.
- The Panel Chair 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 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 Panel Chair. 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 their comments will be minuted.
- If further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. When the Panel Chair considers that all issues have been sufficiently discussed, they will conclude the hearing.
- The hearing is a private proceeding. No notes, records or oral statements relating to the complaint, or to any matter discussed in or arising from the hearing, may be published or otherwise made available, directly or indirectly, to the press or other media.
- After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision about each complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations.
- The Panel's decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, **within seven working days** of the

hearing. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the college premises by the Governing Body and the Principal.

- The decision of the Panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within the college for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the college's complaints procedure.

Data protection complaints

MPW acknowledges its obligations under section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to data protection complaints. Where a complaint made under this policy includes data protection issues, those aspects will be handled in accordance with the college's data protection obligations and, where appropriate, its separate data protection complaints procedure. Where the complaint relates to a student's personal data, the college will consider whether the student has sufficient maturity to exercise their own data protection rights and whether the parent is authorised to act on the student's behalf or receive information relating to the complaint.

MPW operates a separate data protection complaints procedure for complaints which are solely or primarily concerned with data protection matters. The college will determine on a case-by-case basis whether a complaint is best dealt with under this policy or under that separate procedure, taking into account the substance of the complaint as a whole.

Data protection complaints will be acknowledged **within 30 days** of receipt. The college will take appropriate steps to investigate and respond promptly, keep the complainant informed of progress where appropriate, and communicate the outcome without undue delay. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be advised of their right to escalate the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Vexatious or unreasonable complaints

The college will do its best to be helpful to parents who wish to raise a complaint. However, there may be occasions when, despite all three stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If a parent attempts to re-open the same issue, the college will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the parent contacts the college again about the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial and/or vexatious' and the college may choose not to respond.

The college adopts the Department for Education's definition of unreasonable behaviour and may regard a complaint as unreasonable where the conduct of a complainant hinders the fair and efficient consideration of the complaint. This may include refusing to engage with the process, repeatedly raising the same issues, seeking unrealistic outcomes, making excessive or aggressive demands on staff time, using abusive, threatening or discriminatory language, providing false information, or using social media or public forums inappropriately. The college will consider all the circumstances, including the substance and history of the complaint, proportionality and any evidence of improper purpose, before reaching a decision. Wherever possible, concerns will first be discussed informally with the complainant. Where unreasonable behaviour continues, the college may issue a warning, place reasonable limits on communication, pause the complaints process until the behaviour ceases or, in serious cases involving aggression or violence, involve the police and restrict access to the college.

Any designation of a complaint as vexatious or unreasonable will apply to the complaint or conduct in question, not to the complainant personally.

Record keeping

A written record will be kept by the Principal of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the college as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing. At the college's discretion additional records may be kept.

MPW processes personal data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. In handling complaints, the college may collect, use and retain information relevant to the complaint, including details of the complainant and student, correspondence, investigation records, witness statements, notes of meetings or hearings, and the outcome of the complaint. Where necessary, this may include special category personal data, such as information relating to an individual's physical or mental health. All personal data will be processed and retained in accordance with the college's data protection obligations and relevant policies.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required under paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; namely, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligations prevail. Records of individual complaints will be retained for at least seven years unless they relate to allegations of abuse in which case they will 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 this is longer.

During the 2025/2026 academic year, the college received 1 formal complaint, which did not progress to a Panel Hearing.

Monitoring and review of complaints policy and procedures

The Governing Body will monitor the number and type of complaints received and the operation of the procedures set out in this policy. It will also review the policy at least annually to ensure it meets statutory requirements and continues to reflect best practice.

Linked policies

- Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

Appendix 1: Formal Complaint Form

Please read the college's **Complaints Policy** before completing this form. It explains when this form should be used and how the formal complaints procedure operates.

This form should be completed by a person with **parental responsibility** for the student and returned to the Principal at adam.cross@mpw.ac.uk. If the complaint is about the Principal, it should be returned to the Chair of Governors at steve.boyes@mpw.ac.uk.

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

Your name(s)	
Name of student and your relationship to them	
Contact address	
Daytime telephone number	
Mobile telephone number	
Email address	
Details of the complaint <i>If there is more than one ground of complaint, please number each ground so that it can be considered separately.</i>	
Action taken to date, including the staff member(s) who have dealt with the matter and any solutions offered	
Why was this not a satisfactory resolution?	

What outcome or action would you like?

Relevant documents enclosed with this complaint form

Declaration

The information included in this complaint is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to cooperate fully with the college's complaints procedure and acknowledge my ongoing obligation to treat the college and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signature(s):

Date: