MOUNT

ST MARY'S | BARLBOROUGH HALL

Complaints Procedure

ISI Regulatory Code – 33a

Policy Owner: Executive Team
This Policy is for: Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall School
Linked Policies: Admissions and Safeguarding Policy
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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the details of a three stage process by which the school handles complaints from parents/carers with children at Mount St Mary's and Barlborough Hall. The policy does not apply to parents/carers of prospective students but does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still at the school.

1.1a Any complaint must be made in writing within one week of the incident/event occurring, and in the event of escalation through the various stages, the complaint should reach the governing panel within one calendar month (subject to school holidays).

1.2 As a parent/carer of a pupil at the school, if you are unhappy and seek action, then please get in touch.

1.3 A copy of the current complaints policy is available through the school website.

1.4 We welcome suggestions and comments from parents/carers and take seriously any concerns or complaints that you may have. All will be treated in a professional and appropriate manner in accordance with this policy.

1.5 When we receive a complaint we want to listen carefully to the parent/carer and to find a resolution however, there have been and are instances when a complaint or complaints are either serial or unreasonable. There are also sadly occasions when some concerns are raised in a manner that are perceived to be abusive, threatening or offensive. All complaints which fall into this category will not be accepted.

1.6 As a school we define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the school's consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school. Examples would include, but are not limited to, the complainant:

- Refusing to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints investigation process
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints process
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or good practice
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be both commented on and taken into account
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting that they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales

- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeking to have them replaced
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed
- Refusing to accept the findings of the investigation where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
- Making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, writing, by email and by telephone where the complaint is being dealt with
- Using threats to intimidate
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly providing false or falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums
- Attempting to investigate or interfere with an investigation eg by contacting multiple members of staff with requests for information

1.7 When a complaint is received there are three steps to the process.

2. Informal

2.1 It is our experience and our hope that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

2.2 If parents/carers have a complaint they should normally contact their child's form tutor or class teacher. Acknowledgement of a complaint or concern will normally be sent within 24 hours, allowing for weekends and holidays. In many cases most concerns or complaints will be resolved in this way, almost immediately, and to the full satisfaction of the parent/carer. If the form tutor/class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with a faculty head or head of year before they are able to respond.

2.3 Complaints made directly to a member of staff, head of year or the deputy head may be referred to other relevant member of staff e.g. faculty head, houseparent etc.

2.4 Should the matter not be resolved within seven working days (allowing for school holidays) or in the event that the tutor and the parent/carer fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent/carer will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with the formal, preliminary stage of this policy.

3. **Formal (Preliminary Stage)**

3.1 If the complaint is more serious, (e.g. a complaint about a member of staff), or the parent/carer does not feel that an informal complaint has been handled satisfactorily, or the parent/carer wishes the complaint to be considered in a formal manner, then the parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster/Headteacher. The Headmaster/Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

3.2 The Headmaster/Headteacher will respond to the parents within seven working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

3.3 It may be necessary for the Headmaster/Headteacher to carry out further investigations.

3.4 The Headmaster/Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. All such notes and correspondence will be kept confidential.

3.5 Once the Headmaster/Headteacher is satisfied that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing. The Headmaster/Headteacher will also give reasons for his/her decision. Notwithstanding holiday periods parents/carers will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 working days of receiving the complaint.

3.6 If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the Formal (Complaints Panel Hearing) part of this policy.

3.7 If the complaint concerns the Headmaster/Headteacher, then the parent/carer should contact the Chair of Governors at the address below. The Chair of Governors may initially deal with the matter informally or refer it to a formal panel hearing.

4. **Formal (Complaints Panel Hearing)**

4.1 Following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, if parents/carers seek to invoke a formal Panel Hearing, they should write to the Chair of Governors.

4.2 The Chair of Governors can be contacted by writing to:
Email: clerktogovernors@msmcollege.com
Address: Chair of Governors, Mount St Mary's College, College Road, Spinkhill, S21 3YL.

4.3 The matter will then be referred to a complaints panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management of the running of the school. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 working days (allowing for school holidays).

4.4 If the panel deems it necessary, it may require additional information on the complaint in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information shall be supplied to all parties no later than two days prior to the hearing.

4.5 The parents/carers 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.

4.6 If possible, the panel will resolve the parents/carers complaint immediately, without need for further investigation.

4.7 Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out. Allowing for school holidays the panel will write to the parents /carers informing them both of their decision, and the logic behind it within 7 days.

4.8 The decision of the panel will be final.

4.9 The hearing allows the panel to both identify outcomes and provide recommendations. These outcomes and recommendations will be sent to the complainant and where relevant, the person who is the subject of the complaint. They will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster/Headteacher as appropriate.

4.9.1 A written record will be maintained of all complaints including: at which stage they were resolved; how they were resolved; and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint.

4.9.2 All aspects of a complaint including but not limited to correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential with the exception of where disclosure is required as a result of an investigation by the Secretary of State or an investigation under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

4.10 Parents/carers can make a complaint to ISI whose contact details are:
Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.
Info@isi.net020
76000100

4.11 Parents/carers of boarders who have a complaint about the welfare (not education) can contact:
The National Standards Commission, Parkview House, Woodvale Office Park, Woodvale Road, Brighouse, HD6 4AB.
Telephone – 01132 204 600

4.12 The school will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. In the same way complaints regarding the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement will also be recorded.

4.13 During the academic year 2020-21 there were four complaints registered under the formal panel hearing procedure. One complaint was for Barlborough Hall School and three were for Mount St Mary's College.