



IPSWICH SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY **(including EYFS)**

Review and Approval

Date Last Reviewed by Senior Management	September 2025
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Overview

Ipswich School (the “School”) prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils, this is reflected in our Aims and Values of care, passion, potential and communication. However if parents or pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care, and in accordance with this complaints procedure (the “Procedure”).

This Procedure is available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School’s website and in the School office during the school day. For our Boarding Pupils a copy of Appendix 3 is also available in our Westwood and Anglesea Heights Boarding facilities.

The School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are made aware that this Procedure is available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by current parents. It may also be used by current Boarding Pupils to raise their own complaints about Boarding provision.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this Procedure. “Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates.

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 or pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this Procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a Parent or pupil believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Under no circumstances will the School discriminate against a Pupil because of expressions of concern or complaints.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

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 Form Teacher. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Section (e.g. Lower Prep Lead, Prep Deputy Head, Head of Lower School, Head of Middle School, Head of Sixth Form).
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Section will usually be referred to the Form Teacher unless it is deemed appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the Form Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Prep Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head. If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governing Body, whose contact details are available on the Stage 2 form at the end of this Procedure.
- If the complaint is regarding a financial matter, the complaint should be directed to the Bursary in the first instance. The Bursary can be contacted via email fees@ipswich.school. If the Bursary team cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Financial Controller or Director of Finance and Operations.

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 Prep Head/Head. The Prep Head/Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Prep Head/Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the decision of Stage 1 of the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Prep Head/Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Prep Head/Head (or their nominee) 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 Prep Head/Head (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision.

In most cases, the Prep Head/Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 10 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

- If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the reference to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing, using the Stage 3 Submission Form to the Clerk to the Governing Body, within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated, due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. In the event that parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.
- The Clerk to the Governing Body, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel (the “Panel”), will then refer the appeal to the Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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. The Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governing Body, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents’ complaint 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:
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 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 Stage 2 decision-taker. 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.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the Procedure **within 25 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 25 working days**.

Please note that, for the purposes of this Procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint, although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this Procedure (refer to Appendix 4).

Recording Complaints and use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all 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* <https://www.ipswich.school/privacy/>. 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 and Data Protection Policy*, 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 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 (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

For the academic year 2024-2025 the School received 0 Formal Complaint.

Confidentiality

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. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

EYFS

Parents of EYFS pupils 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.

Ipswich School 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 and Retention of Records Policy.

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: info@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Appendix 1 - Stage 2 Submission Form - Formal Resolution

Please complete and return the below form to the Prep Head/Head, who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken:

The Head

Ipswich School

25 Henley Road

Ipswich, Suffolk

IPI 3SG

The Prep Head

Ipswich Prep School

3 Ivry Street

Ipswich, Suffolk

IPI 3QW

Email: nig@ipswich.school

prephead@ipswich.school

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the Pupil (if relevant):
Address
Postcode
Day time phone number
Evening phone number
Email address

<p>Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, events, key evidence etc.) in order to allow the matter to be fully investigated. (You may attach additional documents if you wish; please be sure to number them clearly.)</p>
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What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. with whom have you spoken or to whom have you written and what has been the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the issue at this stage?

If you are attaching additional documents, please number these attachments and list details below.

Signature:

Date:

For School use only

Date complaint form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Date complaint referred:

Appendix 2 - Stage 3 Submission Form - Appeal Panel Hearing

Please complete and return the below form to the Clerk to the Governing Body, who will acknowledge and explain what action will be taken:

Clerk to the Governing Body

Ipswich School

25 Henley Road

Ipswich. Suffolk

IP1 3SG

jmh@ipswich.school

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the Pupil:
Address
Postcode
Day time phone number
Evening phone number
Email address

<p>Dear Sir/Madam</p> <p>I submitted a formal complaint to the School on and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed and/or the outcome. My complaint was dealt with as a Formal Resolution Complaint following the School's procedures and I received a response from the Prep Head/Head on</p> <p>I am dissatisfied by the way the procedure was carried out because:</p>

and/or by the final outcome because:

(you may continue on separate sheets or attach additional documents if you wish. In this case, please number the attachments and list details below)

What actions do you think might resolve the issue at this stage?

I would like the panel to conduct a hearing

a) On the papers

b) At a meeting that I will attend

At the meeting I would like to be accompanied by the following:

Signature:

Date:

For school use only

Date complaint form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Date complaint referred:

Appendix 3 – Complaints Procedure for Boarding Pupils

Under no circumstances will the School discriminate against a Pupil because of expressions of concern or complaints.

Boarding Pupils are encouraged to discuss any concerns or complaints first with their Boarding Tutor.

Boarding Pupils may also approach the School's Independent Listeners with a complaint or seek advice from Suffolk County Council Social Care Services.

The School's Independent Listeners are:

Rev Alan Forsdike and Rev Catherine Forsdike

2 Henley Road Ipswich IP1 3SF

01473 252904

alan.forsdike@btinternet.com

alan@wtandw.org.uk

Suffolk County Council Social Care Services can be contacted via Customer First. This is a call centre that will ensure that the right social worker gets the referral. Contact details for customer First are provided below:

By phone: 0808 800 4005 during normal working hours. Outside these hours this number will divert to the Emergency Duty Service who can deal with any matters that cannot wait until the next working day. Please note that this is an emergency service only.

By online chat: <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/advice.page?id=NYFzl7NuJU>

Appendix 4 – Vexatious and Unreasonable Complaints

1. Ipswich School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.
2. Ipswich School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:
 - 2.1. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 - 2.2. refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process
 - 2.3. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
 - 2.4. insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
 - 2.5. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 - 2.6. raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 - 2.7. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 - 2.8. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 - 2.9. repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
 - 2.10. refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
 - 2.11. seeks an unrealistic outcome
 - 2.12. makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
 - 2.13. uses threats to intimidate
 - 2.14. uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
 - 2.15. knowingly provides falsified information
 - 2.16. publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.
3. Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

4. Whenever possible, the Prep Head/Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.
5. If the behaviour continues, the Prep Head/Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Ipswich School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
6. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Ipswich School.