



Vita et Pax Preparatory School

Complaints Policy

Policy Originator	<i>Allana Gay Head Teacher</i>
Status	Statutory
Last reviewed	01/09/2023
Review period	Annually

This policy is reviewed annually and ratified by the Governing Body. Families are encouraged to be familiar with this policy via the school website. Copies of this policy and its associated documents are available from the school office

School ethos

Vita et Pax Preparatory School is a co-educational environment for children from the age of three to the end of their primary education. Our school delivers a child centred and coordinated approach to nurturing character for the future. We aim for our children to be creative and caring learners who are happy to be in our dedicated learning environment. Our school works in strong partnership with our parents to ensure students are demonstrably safe, academically confident and well cared for physically, socially and emotionally. The school will always take actions that are in the best interest of the child and will provide positive outcomes for their development. Vita et Pax Preparatory School is committed to creating and sustaining a learning environment that maintains respect and dignity for all. We value the diversity of our staff and students and work to provide a supportive environment in which the unique character of every individual is valued and celebrated.

Vita et Pax Preparatory 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. We will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and 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. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Vita et Pax Preparatory 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.

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 parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints 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.

Rationale

In accordance with Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, the procedures to deal with all complaints relating to the school or services and facilities provided by the school are made readily available. This policy is written with regard to DfE "Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019".

Differentiating concerns and complaints

A 'concern' is generally defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. Concerns are informal in nature. The school acknowledges concerns and makes every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.

A 'complaint' is generally defined as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. 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, raise[s] in good faith. The Governing Body and Headteacher recognise the value to all concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions, which a parent of a pupil or other aggrieved person may have. Any complaints about the school or its staff are received in a positive manner and are handled seriously and sensitively at an early stage. The Headteacher operates in an open manner thus allowing members of the School community to feel comfortable in contacting the Headteacher or other members of staff.

Making a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party, with appropriate consent, acting on behalf of a complainant. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Our complaints procedure seeks to :

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be impartial including a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time limits for action
- keep people informed of the progress;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.

Process for managing complaints.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution of concerns – Concern heard by staff member

If parents have a concern or informal complaint they should normally contact their child's class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Headteacher within 48 hours.

Stage 1 concerns or informal complaints will be responded to within 5 working days of being made. The member of staff investigating will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Every effort should be made to try to resolve the complaint to parents' satisfaction as far as possible. A written record of the concern or informal complaint, staff findings, agreed actions and resolution will be kept.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will acknowledge, in writing, receipt of the complaint within 3 working days. After considering the complaint, the Headteacher will decide on the appropriate course of action to take. It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations. In most cases, the Headteacher will meet/speak to the parents concerned. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headteacher 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 at a meeting and in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision reached. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing – Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appraisal panel

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be advised to write to the Chair of Governors within 3 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2.

They should set out their grounds of appeal and any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on. 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 Chair of governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 20 working days. The Panel will consist of at least two 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. One panel member will act as the Chair of the panel and will acknowledge the complaint progression 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 no later than 5 days prior to the hearing. 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. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' 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 all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and recommendations will be shared within 10 working days of

the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent to the complainant, the Headteacher, the Governors and any other relevant person.

Confidentiality of records

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 2008 Act requests access to them. In accordance with data protection principles details of individual complaints will be kept for as long as is reasonably necessary under the circumstances.

The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure – to include whether they are resolved at that stage or proceed to panel hearing. As per Part 6 para 3 (f) details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available.

In the academic year 2020/21

Stage 2 Complaints: 0 Stage 3 Complaints: 0

In the academic year 2021/22 Stage 2 Complaints: 0 Stage 3 Complaints: 0

In the academic year 2022/23 Stage 2 Complaints: 0 Stage 3 Complaints: 0

In the academic year 2023/24 stage 2 Complaints: 2 Stage 3 Complaints: 1