



MANCHESTER  
MUSLIM  
PREPARATORY  
SCHOOL

FAITH • LEARNING • LIFE

# COMPLAINTS POLICY & PRODECURES



## Document Control

<b>This policy has been approved for operation within</b>	Manchester Muslim Preparatory School
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## INTRODUCTION

The partnership between the parent/carer and the school is integral to the ethos and mission of the MIET schools, where Islamic values are at the heart of everything that we do, and should be characterised by a mutual respect by which parents/carers feel they are able to bring their concerns to the attention of someone in the school, at any time, with the expectation they will be listened to and their concerns addressed.

Not all concerns are complaints. A concern is an issue raised by a parent, pupil or other person that is resolved quickly and informally. Most concerns are resolved by the person to whom the concern is addressed e.g. the class teacher. Every effort should be made to allay concerns at this level and with the least possible formality. The ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint.

Occasionally, however, a concern will be too serious to be handled in this way, perhaps needing greater investigation; or the person concerned may not feel that the answers given so far have been acceptable or adequate. In such circumstances the concern will become a complaint and this document outlines the formal procedure that should be followed in such cases.



## 1. Aims

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The School's Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
  - be simple to use and understand;
  - treat complaints confidentially;
  - allow problems to be handled swiftly;
  - inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur;
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- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and Trustees as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
  - ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
  - discourage anonymous complaints;
  - actively encourage strong home-school links;
  - ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents/carers;
  - ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
  - regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from

MMPS's aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible.

Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

## 2. LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE

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This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with unreasonable complaints.

## 3. DEFINITIONS & SCOPE

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### 3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”
- Jewellery should not be worn other than watches and plain stud earrings (silver or gold colour). The jewellery is the responsibility of the children to look after.
- No make-up should be worn by children at school
- No coloured nail varnish should be worn by children in school

### 3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Safeguarding
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school’s support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the Head of Year or SEND, they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEND policy and SEND Information

Report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.



Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

## 4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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### 4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint publicly, for example but not limited to, on social media

### 4.2 The investigator

The Head Teacher, or the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Trustees (if the complaint is against the EHT), may decide to appoint an individual to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Head Teacher or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions

### 4.3 The Trust Manager will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

### 4.4 Committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

## 5. PRINCIPLES FOR INVESTIGATION

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It is important for all parties to the complaint, that the investigation is impartial, thorough and fair.

It is also important that all parties to the complaint feel they have been listened to and have been able to make their contributions to the process.

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened – the investigation may not proceed until there is absolute clarity as to the exact nature of the complaint
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right
- It maybe necessary to contact the complainant if there is any uncertainty to the above points

### 5.1 Time scales



The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

## 6. EXPRESSING A CONCERN: NOTES FOR PARENTS/ CARERS

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### **If you have a concern**

We would like you to tell us about it so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve your concern. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem which is more than a day or two old.

**After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. our procedure is in 3 stages which are outlined below:**

## 7. STAGES OF COMPLAINT

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### **7.1 Stage 1: informal**

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff; class teacher as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school admin: [admin@MMPS.miet.uk](mailto:admin@MMPS.miet.uk) or call 0161 445 5452

The relevant staff will acknowledge informal complaints within **5** school days, and investigate and provide a response within **10** school days.

The informal stage may involve a meeting between the complainant and the relevant staff. If the complaint is not resolved, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

### **7.2 Stage 2: formal**

If you are still unhappy, then a formal complaint can be raised:



- By letter or email (marked confidential)
- Or by completing the form in Appendix 1
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the Head Teacher PA: [pa@mmps.miet.uk](mailto:pa@mmps.miet.uk) or call 0161 445 5452

The Head Teacher (or designated member of the senior leadership team) will call a meeting to clarify concerns and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Head Teacher (or other person appointed by the Head Teacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within **10** school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Trust Manager office within **5** school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

### **How to escalate a complaint**

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the Trust Manager office via the school office: [z.hafeez@MMPS.miet.uk](mailto:z.hafeez@MMPS.miet.uk)

The Trust manager will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

## **7.3 Stage 3: submit the complaint to the review panel**

### **Convening the panel**

The review panel consists of the first 3 members of the Trustees available, who don't have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10). The Trustees will select a panel chair from amongst themselves.

If there are not enough impartial Trustees available, we will seek panel members from one of our other MIET schools,. We will make sure the Trustees we source are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. The Trust manager will aim to find a date within **15** school days of the request, where possible.



If the complainant rejects the offer of **3** proposed dates without good reason, the Trust Manager will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **3** school days before the date of the meeting. Depending upon the circumstances of the complaint, there will be a suggested length of time set for the meeting.

### **At the meeting**

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, and make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the Head Teacher.

### **The outcome**

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within **5** school days.

## **8. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE HEADTEACHER, A TRUSTEE OR TRUST BOARD**

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### **8.1 Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against the Head Teacher or any member of the Trust board should be directed to the Executive Headteacher in the first instance.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher or one member of the Trust board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably-skilled and impartial Trustee will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above).

### **8.2 Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire Trust board or the majority of them, an independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the Trust board or and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

## **9. EXAMPLES OF RESOLUTION OUTCOMES**

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Before the investigating person meets with the complainant it is important that she/he is satisfied that the investigation has been impartial, thorough and fair and that the summary explained to the complainant is able to demonstrate this clearly. If an independent investigator has been used for all or part of the investigation it is important to explain the reasons to the complainant.

The complainant should be informed of the decision reached by the investigator giving reasons and evidence as to why the decision was reached. Every effort should be made to reach a resolution at this meeting. Any of the following may be appropriate:

- an acknowledgement that a complaint is valid in whole or in part (if this is the case the investigator should refer to the part of the investigation where the complainant was asked what they feel would put things right);
- an apology;
- an explanation;
- a clarification of misunderstandings;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that, as far as is possible, the event complained of will not happen again.
- an explanation of the steps to be taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review the school policies in light of the complaint. Some of the above may require that the investigator seeks authority from the Head Teacher or, in the case of the Head Teacher investigating, the governing board.

The investigator may come to the decision the complaint is unfounded. If this is the case the investigator should ensure that the evidence from the investigation confirms this on the balance of probabilities. The investigator must be sensitive to the complainant's feelings and should make them aware that they had a right to bring their concerns to the attention of the school and if the complaint arose from a misunderstanding to explain how this might have occurred and clarify the area from which the misunderstanding arose.

## **10. PERSISTANT COMPLAINTS**

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### **10.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure



- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaint's procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaint's procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

### **Stopping responding**

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

### **10.2 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.



### **10.3 Complaint campaigns**

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

## **11. RECORD KEEPING**

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The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and our data protection policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole Trust board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the Trust is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

## **12. LEARNING LESSONS**

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The Chair of Trustees will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Head Teacher and senior leadership team, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **13. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

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The Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The chair of Trustees will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 13.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Head Teacher.



This policy will be reviewed by, the Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teacher and full Trust Board every **3 years**.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the full Trust board.

## 14. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

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Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEND policy and information report
- Privacy notices

## 15. APPENDIX

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### Manchester Muslim Preparatory School

When we receive a written complaint we aim to acknowledge its receipt within **2** school days and send a full or interim response within **5** school days.

Name of complainant:

Address:

Name of child:

Relationship to child:

Postcode:

Telephone (day)

Telephone (evening)

What is your concern and how has it affected you?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so please list below:

Have you already discussed this matter with any member of staff? If so who did you speak to and what was their response?

What would you like to happen as a result of your making this complaint?



Signature:

Date:

**Please return this form to the school office**