

Complaints Policy

NB For complaints from sources which are not parent/carers of students in the Trust, please see policy Complaints.non parents on the Trust web-site).

Trust Policy	
Monitoring	Frame of engagement
Member of Staff Responsible	Executive Principal
Consultation Parameters	Trust Board
Date of Policy	September 2018
Review Cycle	3 years
Date of Review	September 2021
Website	Yes

School Level Policy	
Non-Statutory	
Member of Staff Responsible	Headteacher
Review Cycle	3 Years
Approval	LGB free to delegate to individual Governor or Headteacher
Legislation	Education Act 2002. Section 29 (which relates to Maintained schools)

Statement of Intent

The Executive Principal and Trust Board are fully committed to the sustained improvement of our Trust. Where concerns are raised by interested parties or simply through the continual and thorough self-evaluation process, we will investigate these matters thoroughly. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible.

This procedure is intended to allow a concern or complaint to be made relating to the The Priory School Trust and the services that it provides, in a formal manner; this enables the complainant to progress the level at which the complaint is made. Its existence does not automatically mean that the complainant will receive satisfaction according to the original reason for the complaint. Complaints relating to individual schools must be made according to each school's individual complaints policy.

At any point in time, should the conduct of the complainant be judged as unacceptable, including through vexatious conduct, or harassment, or where the complainant pursues a complaint to an excessive level because they have not had a satisfactory outcome, then the Trust reserves the right to take action to prevent any further incidence of such conduct.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

1.0 Introduction

Records of any complaints made through this policy will be retained and reported to governors.

Any concerns raised will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and we ask the complainant does likewise. Any relevant parties will, however, be consulted to assist with any investigations being carried out.

2.0 Informal Stage

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the Executive Principal. This may be by email, letter, by telephone or in person by appointment, requested via The Priory School office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

The request must include sufficient details to allow the Trust to decide whether a meeting is necessary, who should be asked to attend the meeting (and therefore to make any necessary preparations). Parents may request at this stage, but not insist, attendance of certain individuals from the Trust and therefore it will be for the Trust to decide on the attendees. Equally, parents may request, but not insist, that they are accompanied. These individuals will be invited on the understanding that they are supporting the complainant, not joining in with their complaint. i.e. their role at the meeting is a passive one, unless invited to comment.

It is hoped that the procedure will stop at this informal stage if the concern has been explained satisfactorily, or a shared understanding has been reached of the issue being raised and actions, where appropriate, agreed.

3.0 Formal Stage

a) If the complainant is still dissatisfied, or if the complaint is of a very serious nature, the complaint should be addressed to The Executive Principal. Complaints must be made in writing and be accompanied by any appropriate documentation. At this stage it may be recommended to have a meeting with a representative of the Trust Board, to ascertain if there is a way forward to finding a solution.

Investigations may involve other senior staff. Complaints will normally be investigated within 20 school days. When the investigation is complete, the Principal will write to the complainant to explain the outcome of the investigation, or may invite them to a meeting to discuss the matter further.

b) If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed or it is felt that the reasons given for the decision were erroneous, or the matter refers to the Executive Principal, then the complainant may request that the Trust Board reviews the process followed, or receives representation from the complainant. This must be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board and reach the Clerk to the governing body within 10 working days of the Executive Principal's decision at 3 a above.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust Board may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify concerns and to explore the possibility of a resolution. If this invitation is accepted the complainant may be accompanied by a friend, to assist in explaining the nature of the concern(s). Should this not lead to an acceptable and agreed solution, arrangements will be made for the matter to be presented to governors formally. In any case, the complainant should learn in writing, usually within 10 school days of the school receiving the formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

4.0 Governors Complaints Panel

Any review of the process followed or the reasons given for the decision by the Trust will be conducted by a panel of 3 people; two Governors from the Trust Board and one panel member who is independent of the management and running of The Priory School.

Having received details of the complaint in writing, the Clerk to the Trust will seek similar written responses from the relevant member of staff, where this is necessary.

A meeting of the panel will take place, usually within 20 school days, to consider the matter. The panel will inform both parties of their response within 5 school days of their decision.

4.1 Process

The complainant (who may be accompanied by a friend if they wish) and representative(s) from the school (who may also be accompanied by workplace colleagues or representatives from their professional associations) may be invited to attend this meeting in order to clarify the matter. As the panel meeting is intended to be investigatory, rather than adversarial, the persons giving evidence or making representations to the panel will normally attend separately.

When the panel has collected sufficient information, it will deliberate and then inform the complainant, the Principal (and the governing body, through either a separate note or via the usual sub-committee agenda, depending on the nature of the complaint) of the outcome, in writing.

Consideration of the complaint by the Trust Board, save for any actions that are agreed, will terminate at this point.

Further Action: The decision of the governing body is final but if the complainant remains dissatisfied they have the right to register the complaint to the Education Funding Agency, or Ofsted, or the Local Authority:-

Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ, or via the Department of Education website.

OFSTED
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA 08456 404045

However, the responsibility for dealing with general complaints lies solely with the Trust. The procedures of the EFA and other agencies are expected to reflect existing legislation and ensure that any complaint received by them, which does not fall to them by statute to resolve, will be redirected to the school immediately and that the complainant be informed accordingly.