

M2 Complaints Policy

The Purcell School (**the School**) takes pride in the quality of its teaching and the pastoral care and support we provide to our students. We seek to maintain excellent relationships with the parents and guardians (hereafter, “parents”) of students attending the School and to work cooperatively with them, and in that spirit we welcome any comments and suggestions parents may have. There may be occasions during a student’s time at the School when parents may feel they wish to make a complaint. Complaints will be taken seriously, managed in a fair and proportionate way and in accordance with the procedure set out in this Policy. It is hoped that most matters can be resolved promptly and informally.

This procedure is not available to parents of prospective students; it may only be used by parents of current students. Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the student to which the complaint relates was still registered at the School.

Safeguarding & Child Protection: If you have a concern regarding safeguarding or Child Protection, please contact the School’s Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection, Mr Ziggi Szafranski, directly by telephoning the School Office (01923 331100).

Appeals against expulsion or required removal: These are heard under a different procedure, details of which are available via The Principal’s Office.

We encourage parents to raise concerns with us promptly so that they can be appropriately addressed and resolved as soon as possible. It may be difficult for us to properly investigate and address incidents or problems which happened some time ago. We ask that you please state your problem or concern courteously: it does not help staff to resolve issues if intemperate, inappropriate or aggressive language is used, either in writing or in person and we expect all our parents to work cooperatively and constructively with the School and communicate in a respectful manner (including with regards to the level, tone and content of communication).

We will not investigate anonymous complaints.

The timeframes in this procedure do not include weekends, bank holidays, or school holidays.

If your complaint is about an action of the Principal personally, then you can refer it in confidence to the Chairman of Governors. You can contact him by writing to him c/o the Bursar or by email.

Stage 1 (Informal)

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. Often there is a misunderstanding which can be easily resolved. If not, we will give you a chance to explain your concerns and will try to resolve them. Of course, this does not mean that in every case we will come

round to your point of view but it will help both you and the School to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

- The person best placed to deal with any concern and complaint will depend on the subject of your complaint, as follows:

Subject of complaint	Person to contact
General academic or pastoral matters	Tutor
Other academic matters, including the curriculum and special educational needs	Vice-Principal or Head of Sixth Form or Director of Teaching and Learning
Specialist music teaching or the music curriculum	Director of Music
Pastoral care, including boarding	Houseparents or Director of Boarding
Financial matters	The Bursar

If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the School Office schooloffice@purcell-school.org.

- If you wish to discuss the matter face to face, the relevant member of staff will usually be able to see you on a school day before or after school. Please contact them by email in advance to make an appointment. We ask that you please do not attend the School without an appointment as the relevant staff member may not be available to meet.
- If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should then proceed to Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 (Formal)

- If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 1 above, you can make a formal complaint directly to the Principal which should be made in writing and set out the background and nature of the complaint and the remedy sought. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of your complaint. Please note, the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that looked at informally under Stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, parents may be advised that they will be considered under Stage 1.
- The Principal will usually delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to the Vice-Principal, another senior member of staff as appropriate or an independent third party, depending on the nature and subject matter of the complaint. The purpose of the investigation will be to establish the relevant facts, as far as reasonably practicable. Such findings will be made on the balance of probabilities, i.e. what is more likely than not to have happened.
- The designated person will conduct a reasonable and proportionate investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or students involved. A written record will be kept of their investigatory meetings.
- The designated person may ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem. You can take a friend or relation to this appointment with you if you wish, who should not be legally qualified, and legal representation will not be permitted.

5. Following the investigation, the Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. You will be informed of this decision in writing and normally within 10 working days. The Principal may also ask to meet with you to explain the decision.

Stage 3 (Appeal) – Panel Hearing

1. If the matter is still not resolved to your satisfaction, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3, and ask for your complaint to be referred to a hearing panel. **The appeal must be made in writing, stating that you are making an Appeal.** Your appeal should be addressed in confidence to the Chairman of Governors and sent to him c/o the Bursar. The Bursar will acknowledge receipt of your appeal.
2. You must lodge your appeal within 10 days of the date of the School's decision made in accordance with the Stage 2 Procedure. You should set out the reasons for your appeal along with the remedies sought and all the supporting documents that you wish to be put before the panel in support of your appeal. You should also state whether you wish to attend the hearing, or whether the panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions.
3. The Chairman of Governors will then convene a panel consisting of three individuals, this will usually be two governors and one member who is independent of the management and running of the School, none of whom will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and so will be able to give it a fresh assessment. The panel will convene as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days (school term-time) of the receipt of your appeal. The remit of the panel shall be at the discretion of the Chairman of Governors.
4. The conduct of the appeal hearing, including who attends and whether any further investigation or information is required, will be a matter for the panel to determine. However, if you have requested to attend the hearing, you will be invited to attend and speak to the panel; you may bring a friend or relative with you, who should not be legally qualified, and legal representation will not be permitted. The Principal may also attend the hearing, and may bring a colleague (normally the person who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 above), or may be interviewed independently by the Panel.
5. The panel is not a formal legal hearing but a private and confidential matter. A minute of the hearing will be taken (usually by the Clerk to the Governors) but no tape, video or digital recording shall be made by any party.
6. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable decision and decide whether to dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part or uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part. The panel may make recommendations. The panel may make its decision by a majority.
7. The panel will endeavour to communicate its decision within 10 days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final and there is no further right of appeal. The panel's decision will be sent in writing or email to the parents, the Principal, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant and appropriate, the person complained about. The decision will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations (if any) made by the panel.
8. Parents should be aware that it is not within the remit of the panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. It has no power to instruct the Principal or members of staff to implement any recommendation(s) made. Where this is deemed necessary, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the Governors for action under delegated powers, or presented to the Governing Body.
9. The record of the outcome of the hearing is kept in school in confidence, available to the Principal and the Chair of Governors.

Welfare of boarders (in accordance with National Minimum Boarding Standard 5.8).

Boarders or their parents who have a complaint about their welfare, which they feel has not been answered by the School's normal procedures can write to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate at:

ISI, First Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or to info@isi.net

Alternatively, they may contact the Local Authority Designated Officer on 0300 123 4043.

Record Keeping

Confidential written records of all formal (Stage 2) complaints, actions taken by the School (whether or not the complaint is upheld) and their outcome (including whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a panel hearing) will be kept in a secure file by the Principal. The records are accessible only by the Principal and the Chair of Governors.

Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

<i>Policy author/reviewer:</i>	<i>Policy date/review date:</i>	<i>Next review due:</i>
Paul Bambrough	December 2020	December 2021
Paul Bambrough	September 2021	September 2022
Paul Bambrough	September 2022	September 2023
Paul Bambrough	September 2023	September 2024
Paul Bambrough	September 2024	September 2025

Number of complaints at Stage 2 or above received in the academic year 2023-24: 1