



St Margaret's School Exeter

Headmistress: Mrs Sheila Cooper

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- **Introduction**

The School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to pupils. It aims to maintain close contact with parents and encourages them to contact school whenever there is cause to do so. This may be done through the pupil's homework diary/contact book, by telephone (to the Form or Subject Teacher in the first instance, then the relevant Key Stage Co-ordinator) or in writing. The overall philosophy is that it is better to sort out small worries early on, in the interests of the pupils and of providing them with the best possible education

However, if parents or guardians do have a complaint about the School, St Margaret's will respond in accordance with the provisions of this Procedure. The Procedure is available to current and prospective parents on request at the school's reception or by emailing mainoffice@stmargarets-school.co.uk.

We aim to resolve as many complaints as possible quickly and informally, and would therefore encourage parents or guardians to follow the **Informal Resolution** procedure first.

Parents or guardians may of course proceed direct to the **Formal Resolution** procedure if they so wish.

- **Procedure**

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If parents or guardians have a complaint, they should raise it with the Head Teacher. He/she can be contacted:

By telephone: (01392) 491699

By Email: headmistress@stmargarets-school.co.uk

By post: **PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**
The Head Teacher
St Margaret's School
147 Magdalen Road
EXETER
EX2 4TS

The Head Teacher will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours
- Agree the way forward with the parent or guardian. This will normally involve:
 - Investigating the complaint with relevant members of staff;
 - Reporting back to the parent or guardian either by telephone, in writing or at a meeting, as appropriate; within seven working days; and
 - In that report, suggesting a resolution of the complaint if it is found to be justified.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they were resolved at this preliminary stage.

If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the steps or decision taken by the Head Teacher, they should if they wish then proceed with the **Formal Resolution** set out below.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution Procedure

The parent or guardian should put their complaint formally and courteously in writing to the Head Teacher ("**Formal Complaint**").

If they have already followed the **Informal Resolution** procedure and have not been satisfied by its outcome, they should refer to that fact in their Formal Complaint, if possible giving reasons for their dissatisfaction.

The Head Teacher will on receipt of the Formal Complaint:

1. Investigate the Formal Complaint (including speaking to any member of staff who is the subject of the Formal Complaint) within seven working days.
2. Prepare a report of the findings ("the Report") within five working days, and send it to the parent or guardian. If it is not possible to complete the report within this time the Head Teacher will inform the parents and agree a new target date with them by which time the report should be completed.

The Report will set out:

- The Head Teacher's findings;
 - The Head Teacher's view as to whether or not the Formal Complaint was justified;
 - If the Formal Complaint was justified, the Head Teacher's recommendations as to how matters will be resolved.
4. Arrange a meeting within five working days of the parent/guardian's receipt of the report with the parent or guardian, if the parent or guardian so wishes to consider the Report and discuss the Head Teacher's recommendations, with a view to reaching agreement with the parent or guardian as to how the matter is to be resolved.

A record of each complaint will be kept for at least three years. A record will also be kept of whether the complaint was resolved at this stage or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing

Stage 3: Appeal

1. If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the outcome of the **Formal Procedure**, they may appeal in writing to the Chairman of the School Council, care of the Clerk to the Governors.
2. The parent or guardian must set out in their Appeal Letter:
 - (i) The element or elements of the **Formal Procedure** against which they are appealing; and
 - (ii) The grounds of the appeal in respect of each such element.
3. On receipt of the Appeal Letter, within fourteen working days, the Chairman will convene an Appeal Panel comprising him/herself, two other members of the Council (excluding any member of the Council who was involved in any way in the procedure or the decision against which the parent or guardian is appealing), and one person who is independent of the running and management of the school. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the DCSF.
4. The Chairman will act as the Chairman of the Appeal Panel.
5. The conduct of the Appeals procedure, and the Appeal Meeting, will (save as provided in this **Appeals Procedure**) be subject to the overall control of the Chairman who will follow the Stage 3 Appeals Procedure.
6. The Chairman will arrange an Appeal Meeting, to be chaired by him/her, at which will be present:
 - The Appeal Panel;
 - The parent or guardian;
 - Any person chosen by the parent or guardian to accompany and support them. This will normally be a friend or family member. Legal representation will not normally be allowed;
 - The Head Teacher; and
 - Any other person agreed by the Chairman and the parent or guardian.
7. In advance of the Appeal Meeting, the Chairman may ask the Head Teacher or the parent or guardian to provide him/her with any further information, statements and/or documents that he/she feels would assist the Appeal Panel in reaching its decision.
8. The Chairman will write to the parent or guardian within 10 working days after the conclusion of the Appeal Meeting with the Panel's decision and the reasons for it.
9. The Chairman will copy that decision letter to:
 - The Head Teacher; and
 - The person against whom the complaint was made (if relevant).

10. The Appeals Panel may:
 - Allow the appeal in full or in part, substitute its own decision for the original decision made, or uphold the decision; and
 - Make any relevant consequential findings and decisions.
11. The decision made on the Appeal will be final.

General

- All complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.
- The School will complete the investigation and concluding decision within not more than 28 working days from the receipt of the complaint.
- .If the issue concerns a pupil in the Early Years Foundation Stage, parents can make a complaint direct to OFSTED [and/or] the Independent Schools Inspectorate, should they so wish.
- Any member of staff who is the subject of complaint under this procedure will be kept informed at all times of the complaint and the steps taken by the School to resolve the complaint.
- All correspondence, documents, minutes and all other records of the complaint and its resolution will be confidential between the School and the parent or guardian. The only exceptions to the policy of confidentiality are the Secretary of State (in practice the Department for Children, Schools and Families) or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the parent or guardian should in the first instance contact the Chairman of the School Council (care of the Clerk to the Governors), who will appoint another member of the Council to deal with the complaint.