

**The Mill Hill School Foundation**

**Walker House, Millers Close, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill,  
London NW7 1AQ**

**Mill Hill School**

**Belmont, Mill Hill Preparatory School**

**Grimsdell, Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School**

**The Mount, Mill Hill International**

## **Policy on the handling of concerns and complaints received from Parents**

---

**Independent Co-educational Day School for Pupils aged 3 to 18  
years and Boarding School for Pupils aged 13 to 18 years**

**Effective March 2017**

## Key Points on the handling of parental concerns and complaints

<b>Purpose</b>	All schools are required to provide guidelines for handling concerns and complaints received from parents of children at the School. This policy aims to resolve a concern or complaint in a positive way as soon as possible and to do so sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level and being fair to those concerned. The policy distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which requires investigation.
<b>The Process</b>	It is a 3 stage process: (1) the informal resolution of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to a member of staff; (2) the formal complaint in writing to the Head; and (3) the Complaints Panel. The Principal Deputy Head at Mill Hill School and the Senior Deputy Head at Belmont, Grimsdell and The Mount, Mill Hill International are the Appointed Persons responsible for investigating and resolving a complaint at their School. A concern or difficulty or complaint received will be reported to the Appointed Person using the Complaints Form.
<b>Stage 1: Informal resolution</b>	A concern or difficulty is expected to be resolved informally by the appropriate member/s of staff. A concern or difficulty raised will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within three (3) working days during term time or if received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable and no later than within three (3) working days of the start of the following term. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing. An informal complaint should be resolved within seven (7) working days of the date of receiving the informal complaint. A concern or difficulty that is not resolved informally and is made formally in writing will be dealt with as a formal complaint.
<b>Stage 2: Formal complaint</b>	A formal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within five (5) working days during term time or if received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable and no later than within five (5) working days of the start of the following term. A formal complaint will be investigated and the findings will be reported to the Head who will notify the parent in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The investigation and notification of the decision will be made within twenty-eight (28) working days of the date of receiving the written complaint in term time or as soon as practicable if the written complaint is either received during or immediately before a school holiday.
<b>Stage 3: Complaints Panel</b>	A parent who is dissatisfied with the Head's decision under Stage 2 may request a hearing before a Complaints Panel by writing to the Clerk of the Court of Governors within seven (7) working days of the decision complained of. The Clerk will acknowledge the request in writing within seven (7) working days. The Panel will comprise a minimum of two Governors and one independent member who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. An independent member is someone who is independent of the governance, management and running of the School. The Panel should meet within twenty-eight (28) working days of the date that the written request was received, not including School half terms or holidays. The parent may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher or friend. Those present at the hearing will have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is a private proceeding, not a legal proceeding. The Panel is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The decision of the Panel will be notified within seven (7) working days.
<b>Record keeping</b>	A written record of all formal complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld, shall be kept for a minimum of three years.
<b>EYFS</b>	Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements directly to Ofsted and/or to ISI.

*The above Key Points are a synopsis and are not intended to replace the policy. The full policy must be read and followed in the event that it needs to be applied. If the Key Points are found to be in conflict with the wording of the full policy, the policy takes priority.*

## The Mill Hill School Foundation

### Policy on the handling of concerns and complaints received from Parents

#### Definitions:

- “School”** : School will mean Mill Hill School, Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School, Grimsdell Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School and The Mount Mill Hill International.
- “Head”** :  
 a. at Mill Hill School will mean the Headmaster of Mill Hill School.  
 b. at Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School will mean the Head of Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School.  
 c. at Grimsdell Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School will mean the Head of Grimsdell Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School.  
 d. at The Mount Mill Hill International will mean the Head of The Mount Mill Hill International.
- “Parent/You (Your)”** : includes current parent or legal guardian or education guardian of a pupil at the School and may at the School’s discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School.
- “Concern”** : is a query or anxiety or dissatisfaction with an aspect of the School or its processes and procedures which is raised or otherwise brought to the attention of the School by phone, email or verbally in person and which is resolved informally either orally or in writing. This is considered an informal complaint.
- “Complaint”** : is a concern that is not resolved informally but is made formally in writing and considered under the formal procedure as described in this policy or is raised directly to a member of the Senior Management Team, or to a Housemaster or Housemistress, or to a Head of Department and which requires investigation, or other significant input, by a member of the Senior Management Team. A record will be made of such formal complaints.
- “Working days”** means Monday to Friday when the School is open during Term time. The dates of Terms are published on the School’s website,

#### Introduction

1. **Circulation:** This policy is addressed to current parent/s or legal guardian/s or education guardian/s of pupils at the School, and may at the School’s discretion include parents whose child has recently left the School. The policy is published on the School website and is available, upon request to the School Office, to the parents, pupils and staff at the School.
2. **Policy Status:** The policy has been approved by the Chief Executive, Head, the Bursar and the Court of Governors of the Mill Hill School Foundation. It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It takes account Part 7 Paragraph 33 of the *Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010* as amended from January 2015 and has regard to Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for

Boarding Schools (2015). The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can be carried out only during term time.

3. **Application:** This policy applies to all concerns and complaints raised with the School. Additional procedures may also apply with regard to a concern or complaint, for example in the event of a child protection issue (see The Mill Hill School Foundation Policy to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children who are pupils at the School).
4. **Three Stages:** This policy describes a three stage procedure:-
  - Stage 1** Informal resolution of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to a member of staff
  - Stage 2** A formal complaint in writing to the Head of the School to which the complaint relates
  - Stage 3** A reference to the Complaints Panel

A concern about the safety of your child should be notified immediately to the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the Head.

### Policy aim and statement

5. **Aim:** The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in the School's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The School will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.
6. **Policy statement:** The School needs to know **as soon as possible** if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. The School recognises that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to the School culture. Parents should never feel – or be made to feel – that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at the School. The policy however distinguishes between a **concern or difficulty** which is an **informal complaint** that can be resolved informally and a **formal complaint** which will require investigation.

### Management of complaints

7. **Appointed Person:** The Head will appoint a senior member of his/her staff, normally a Deputy Head (“Appointed Person”) to be responsible for investigating and resolving a complaint. The Appointed Person will be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved and will keep records

The Principal Deputy Head at Mill Hill School and the Senior Deputy Head at Belmont, Grimsdell and The Mount, Mill Hill International will be responsible for:-

- 7.1 co-ordinating the complaints procedures in the School
  - 7.2 ensuring that all teaching, support and medical staff are made aware of the procedures for reporting a concern or complaint
  - 7.3 monitoring the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints
  - 7.4 reporting regularly to the Head with respect to complaints
  - 7.5 to act at all times when the School is open with authority to take decisions relating to most matters of pastoral care and discipline. The Principal Deputy Head at Mill Hill School and the Senior Deputy Head at Belmont, Grimsdell and The Mount, Mill Hill International can be contacted by telephone and e-mail, details of which are provided in the School Calendar.
8. **Complaint Form:** Every formal complaint notified to a member of staff will be noted, together with the action taken, on a standard form known as the Complaint Form and passed to the Appointed Person and will form part of the School's Complaints log. A sample of the form is attached to this policy.

## Stage 1 – concerns and difficulties

9. **Concerns:** The School expects that most concerns, where a parent seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action can be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error.
10. **Notification:** Please raise the concern initially as follows :-
- 10.1 **Education issues** – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs at Grimsdell Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School or Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School please speak or write to the Form Teacher, and at The Mount Mill Hill International and Mill Hill School please speak or write to the Housemaster/Housemistress or Appointed Person as appropriate
  - 10.2 **Pastoral Care** – for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom or in the House at Grimsdell Mill Hill Pre-preparatory School please speak or write to the Form Teacher, at Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School please speak or write to the Head of Upper School or Head of Lower School as appropriate and at The Mount Mill Hill International and Mill Hill School please speak or write to the Housemaster/Housemistress or Appointed Person as appropriate
  - 10.3 **Disciplinary matters** – for a problem over any disciplinary action taken or sanction imposed at Grimsdell please speak or write to the Deputy Head, at Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School please speak or write to the Head of Upper School or Head of Lower School as appropriate, and at The Mount Mill Hill International and Mill Hill School please speak or write to the Housemaster/Housemistress or Appointed Person as appropriate.
11. **Acknowledgement:** The School will acknowledge a notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within three (3) working days of receipt within term time and if the notification is received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable, and no later than within three (3) working days of the start of the following term. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing but a Complaint Form will be completed and a copy sent to the Appointed Person. An informal complaint should be resolved within seven (7) working days of the date of receiving the written complaint in term time or as soon as practicable if the informal complaint is either received during or immediately before a school holiday.

## Stage 2 – formal complaint

12. **Notification:** An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs formal investigation, or a dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details in an envelope or by email with scanned documents addressed to the **Head of the School to which the complaint relates**. Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within five (5) working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken. If the notification is received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable and no later than within five (5) working days of the start of the following term. A Complaints Form will be completed and sent to the Appointed Person.
13. **Investigation:** The Appointed Person or another senior member of staff designated by the Head will act as **'investigator'**. The investigator may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Head and you will then be notified in writing of his or her decision and the reasons for it. The investigation and notification of the decision will be made within twenty-eight (28) working days of the date of receiving the written complaint in term time or as soon as practicable if the written complaint is either received during or immediately before a school holiday. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint.

### Stage 3 – reference to the Complaints Panel

14. **Notification:** If you are dissatisfied with the Head’s decision under Stage 2 you may request a hearing before a Complaints Panel. If you wish to bring a complaint of a decision to the Complaints Panel please write or email to the Clerk of the Court of Governors (“Clerk”) within seven (7) working days of the decision complained of. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1 and 2. Please ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and your full contact details accompany your letter or email to the Clerk. Please state in your letter or email the outcome that you desire and all the grounds of your complaint. Please also send the Clerk a list of documents which you believe to be in the School’s possession and wish the Panel to see. The Clerk will acknowledge your request in writing within seven (7) working days.
15. **Composition:** The Complaints Panel (“Panel”) will comprise members of the Court of Governors and members who are independent of the governance, management and running of the School. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three (3) individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an **independent member**.
16. **Convening the Panel:** The Clerk will convene the Panel within twenty-eight (28) working days of the date the Clerk to the Court of Governors received the written request for a hearing not including School half terms or holidays when the Panel will not normally sit. You may ask the Clerk to tell you who has been appointed to sit on the Panel. If you have a genuine reason for objecting to one or more members of the Panel then all reasonable efforts will be made to find alternative members. Please note that should the period of twenty-eight (28) working days stated above include a School half term or holiday or an objection is raised by you to the membership of the Panel then in such circumstances there may be a delay to the convening of the Panel which will then be convened as soon as practicable..
17. **Notice of Hearing:** Within fifteen (15) working days of the date the Clerk to the Court of Governors received the written request for a hearing, the Clerk will send you written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will hear it.
18. **Attendance:** You will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher or friend. It is not necessary for that person to be legally qualified but if you do wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, please notify the School at least seven days before the hearing. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk at least **three (3) clear days** prior to the hearing.
19. **Chairman of the Panel (“Chairman”):** The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner.
20. **Hearing:** All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Chairman may direct that the hearing is tape recorded to assist accurate recollection for purposes of the decision. The Panel will be under no obligation to retain tapes thereafter. The Clerk will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings in any event.
21. **Evidence:** The Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
22. **Conduct:** All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.
23. **Adjournment:** The Chairman may at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.

24. **Decision:** After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel shall reach a Decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel's findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you, the Chairman of the Court of Governors, the Head and, where relevant, to the person complained about, within seven working days. Reasons for the Decision will be given. The Decision and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of the Court of Governors and the Head. No further appeal is available after the decision has been made by the Panel.
25. **Private Proceeding:** A hearing before the Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.
26. **Confidentiality:** Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept 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.
27. **Record Keeping:** It is the responsibility of the Appointed Person to ensure that a written record of all formal complaints is kept, including details of whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. A formal complaint is a written complaint as defined on page 1 of this Policy. The record of complaints shall be kept for a minimum of three years. The written record of complaints will be reviewed by the Head, or, at the Head's request, by the Deputy Head of the School.
28. **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):** At Grimsdell, the Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School, where there is provision for the EYFS, the following additional provisions apply to this policy:
- The School will retain a written record of complaints for at least three years, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.
  - Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

### Boarding pupils

29. As there are boarding pupils at Mill Hill School and The Mount Mill Hill International, the requirements under Standard 18 of the National Minimum Boarding Standards (2014) apply to this policy when applied to Mill Hill School and The Mount Mill Hill International. In accordance with this Standard a concern or complaint by parents of boarding pupils will be dealt with in accordance with this Policy.

### Complaints to Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

30. Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements at Grimsdell directly to Ofsted and/or to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI):
- The number for the Ofsted helpline is 08456 404040, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk). Ofsted have produced a leaflet that gives information about how to raise concerns about schools; how to raise concerns with Ofsted; what Ofsted can and will do when they receive complaints; and Ofsted's enforcement and other powers. The leaflet, 'Concerns and complaints about childminders and childcare providers' can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Factsheet-childcare-Concerns-and-complaints-about-childminders-and-childcare-providers>.
  - Parents can also raise concerns related to the quality of education or the welfare health or safety of pupils, by writing to ISI directly to: The Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA at email [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net). Concerns will be recorded and may be copied to the Department for Education (DfE). However, ISI will not investigate disputes about fees or specific complaints about pupils no longer at the school.

**Expulsion**

- 31. A pupil may be formally expelled from the School if it is proved on the balance of probabilities that the Pupil has committed a very grave breach of school discipline or a serious criminal offence. Expulsion is reserved for the most serious breaches. In the event of expulsion or of the Pupil’s removal being required, the Head will advise the parents of the procedure for a Governors’ Review of that decision and which is set out in the Mill Hill School Foundation Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy. A formal complaint regarding the decision to expel or require a Pupil to be removed from the School will be conducted in accordance with Paragraphs 15to 27 inclusive above.

**Number of complaints in a school year**

- 32. The number of complaints in the previous school year may be obtained by contacting the Head’s PA or the school office.

Last review March 2017

---

By resolution of the Nomination and Governance Committee of the Court of Governors

Signed ..... Date .....

Chairman of the Nomination and Governance Committee of the Court of Governors



# The Mill Hill School Foundation

## Mill Hill School Foundation

<b>Complaints Report Form: School .....</b>	
<b>This form is to be completed by any member of staff who receives a formal complaint from a Parent. It should be passed to the Appointed Person at the School.</b>	
<b>Definition of a formal complaint that must be logged on this form:</b>	
<p>a) A formal complaint that has been raised under the Foundation's formal complaints procedures or</p> <p>b) A complaint that is raised directly to a member of the Senior Management Team, or to a Housemaster or Housemistress, or to a Head of Department and which requires formal investigation, or other significant input, by a member of the Senior Management Team</p>	
<b>1. What is the nature of the complaint?</b> (Please tick)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Conduct: <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Care:</span>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Standards : <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> Time Tabling:</span>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of Premises:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Matters of Regime and Routine:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please give details):	
<b>2. Please give details of the complaint:</b>	
Date/s of Incident:	Time/s:
<b>3. Please give the names of any witnesses to the incident/s:</b>	
<b>4. Action Taken:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>5. FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:</b>	
Is this deemed to be a complaint according to the definition used by the School?	YES/NO (please circle)

The Mill Hill School Foundation : a company limited by guarantee  
 Registered in England No. 3404450  
 Registered Office: Walker House, Millers Close, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1AQ  
 Registered Charity No. 1064758