



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Original Policy: 1999, 2005

Date Reviewed: December 2008, January 2010

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Children Act (1989) and Complaint Procedures

We appreciate that a residential placement can be a big move for a young child and it is our aim at Marchant-Holliday for all our pupils to be as happy as possible during their time with us. In keeping with The Children Act (1989) we especially want parents and referring agencies to have confidence in the high level of care and protection which we seek to provide for all our children; we hope that the following brief description of our procedures for dealing with problems will be helpful and reassuring.

Rules and Regulations

At Marchant-Holliday School we allow children a reasonable degree of freedom with opportunities to develop their interests, hobbies and pastimes but certain rules and regulations also exist which we believe are important. These enable all children to develop and progress within a safe, secure framework.

At home as well as at school we believe that no child should be able to do exactly as he likes but that certain limits - for example on bedtimes, dress, language and behaviour - are necessary. Such rules help to set standards and to provide the security which comes from a safe, predictable routine. Every effort will be made by our staff to inform children of what is and is not acceptable so that, with your support as parents any confusion about this can be kept to a minimum.

Rewards and Behaviour Modification

The aim at Marchant-Holliday School is to influence children's behaviour, where possible, by rewarding good behaviour, providing good role models and creating a general ethos of care and cooperation. Occasionally, just as at home, correction may need to be given, and at Marchant-Holliday the consequences to modify poor behaviour may include such things as:

- Addressing the issues with relevant people to put things right
- Withdrawal of privileges relevant to the adverse behaviour
- Being restricted from taking part in a particular activity for a while
- Taking part in extra jobs or chores to compensate for indiscretions
- Paying for deliberate damage out of pocket money or tokens

The great responsibility of ensuring that children's behaviour develops in a healthy and socially acceptable way, is a responsibility we share with parents. We need their support as partners in the process of education so that together we set consistent values, agree basic rules and hold common beliefs of what is right and wrong.

To this end we believe it is vitally important that mutual trust and support is fostered between parents and ourselves so that these aims are achieved.

PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS

1. **Stage 1; Initial Problems – Informal Resolution**

We very much hope that in the first instance parents/carers will feel confident to contact their child's special person, or the Head of Care, Deputy Headteacher or Matron if there is anything they are not happy about. In our experience many concerns can often be dealt with informally, speedily and effectively.

All children at the Marchant-Holliday School are encouraged to discuss their minor worries, concerns or complaints with either:

- Any member of staff at school
- Parents/Carers or other family members
- Their Social Worker or other support/agency worker
- Their friends at school
- The school Independent Visitor or Child Counsellor
- Children have free access to Childline

2. **Stage 2; Complaints Procedure – Formal Resolution**

If a matter cannot be easily settled or seems to be particularly serious, then a child or his parents/carers may wish to make a formal complaint. We are confident that the occasions requiring a formal complaint will be rare but nevertheless we feel it is important to remind parents of their legal right to invoke a complaint procedure if it is felt that this is necessary for a child's security or for peace of mind. Care will be taken to ensure that all such complaints are investigated sympathetically.

Should you feel it necessary to make a formal complaint, a letter should be written using the form below and addressed to the Headteacher, Chairman of Governors or Mr C. J. Oliver (our independent visitor who is a registered social worker.) Parents/Carers can also contact Ofsted Social Care, (address included on the form below.) Receipt of any complaint will be acknowledged within five working days. The matter will be investigated by Mr Oliver or an independent consultant appointed for this purpose. A written response will be provided within fifteen working days. (In the event of a holiday occurring during this period, the report may be delayed to allow sufficient time for collection of evidence.)

3. **Disputed Outcomes**

In the event of the outcome to the investigation being disputed by parents or their children, the School Governors will constitute a complaints panel within fifteen working days. The panel will consist of three people who are not directly involved in matters relating to the complaint. At least one member of the panel will be a person who is not directly related to the management and running of the school.

Parents will be given one week's notice of when the panel will convene and the decision of the panel will be made known to parents within two weeks of the completion of its work.

Parents will be invited to attend the panel hearing and will have the right to be accompanied by a person of their choice.

The panel will be expected to make findings and recommendations and these will be made available to all persons involved in the complaint.

A written record will be kept of:

- The person making the complaint
- The date of the complaint
- The nature of the complaint
- The outcome of the complaint

It is important for pupils to know that, if a problem is sufficiently worrying to them, they too may use the formal complaint procedure; copies of the complaint form will be available for pupils from the school office. In order that the system does not become abused it is expected that pupils will not normally resort to making a formal complaint until they have tried to resolve their problem informally.

All staff are trained in the complaints procedure and the Headteacher has oversight of the system and reports regularly to the Governing body.

4. Allegations of Abuse

All allegations of abuse are treated very seriously at the Marchant-Holliday School. Should any child make a serious allegation of abuse (such as physical or sexual assault) then the agreed Child Protection Procedures involving the Somerset Safeguarding Board will be followed to ensure that the matter is investigated fully and without delay.

5. Records

The school will, as officially recommended, maintain a record of all formal complaints/allegations of abuse together with the results of any investigations that are made. This record will be available to inspectors, LA advisors and professional staff concerned with the welfare of children. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

Marchant-Holliday School
North Cheriton
Templecombe
Somerset
BA8 0AH

COMPLAINT FORM

Pupil's Name _____

I have a serious complaint to make about: -

I would like this to be investigated as soon as possible.

Signed _____

Date _____

Please return this form to the Headteacher or Chairman of Governors at Marchant-Holliday School or to Mr C J Oliver, CQSW, 149 Mudford Road, Yeovil, BA21 4AQ

If you do not feel that you can approach any of the above, contact the Ofsted helpdesk, which is open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Phone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Staff on the helpdesk will discuss your concerns and advise you about whether to put your complaint in writing or suggest other ways to deal with your concerns.

For an online complaints form use <http://live.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints>.

To make a formal complaint write to:

Enquiries, National Business Unit, Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square
Manchester. M2 7LA.

or the

Independent and Boarding Team, Department for Children, Schools and Families,
Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road, Darlington. DL3 9BG.