

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

### **Introduction**

St John's College School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. St John's College School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of current pupils on the school's website. A paper copy can be obtained from the school office.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about the provision of boarding, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

**All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. No pupil will be penalised as a result of a complaint raised by a parent in good faith.**

### **Making a Complaint**

There are three stages in the complaints procedure.

#### **Stage 1 - Informal Complaints**

Informal complaints refer to minor issues which are likely to be resolved quickly and satisfactorily without the need to involve the Head. A parent will receive a response to a complaint within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint by the school.

The following procedure should be followed:

#### **Day School Complaints**

- In the first instance, parents should contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher or Tutor.
- If the Form teacher or Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him or her to pass the matter on to the member of staff best placed to deal with the complaint. For academic issues this will be the subject teacher or the Head of Department. For pastoral issues this will be the Head of Year.
- If at this point the matter is still unresolved it may be necessary to refer the issue to a senior member of staff such as the Director of Studies, the Head of the Junior Department or the Deputy Head.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head.

#### **Complaints about the provision of boarding**

- Boarders' parents should raise complaints about boarding matters with the Housemaster.
- If the complaint has not been resolved by the Housemaster, the parents should proceed to **Stage 2** of this procedure.

Full details of the procedures to follow should a boarder wish to complain are detailed in the Boarders' Handbook on Page 12. All informal complaints will be recorded on a pupil Pastoral/Academic Incident template and in cases of complaints about boarding provision, a record will be made in the complaints log in the boarding house. In all cases a copy will be sent to the Deputy Head and the Head.

## **Stage 2 - Formal Complaints**

Formal complaints refer to complaints which could not be resolved at Stage 1 of the process.

The following procedure should be followed:

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis parents should put their complaint *in writing<sup>1</sup> to the Head*. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for their decision.
- Given that further investigation may be necessary, a parent will receive a response to a formal complaint from the Head within 10 working days of receipt of the formal complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make the complaint in writing directly to the Chair of Governors.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to **Stage 3** of this procedure.

## **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing**

A panel meeting will be arranged as the result of failure to find a satisfactory resolution in Stage 2 of the process.

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Complaints Panel Convenor who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of governors and the Head. A copy will also be held at the school for inspection by the Chairman of governors and the Head at any time.

## **Recording Complaints**

In accordance with the ISI Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements Part 7 para 33 (j), the school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints (written) and whether they are resolved at stage 2 or stage 3 of the procedure, and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS 18), the school will record if the complaint is related to the provision for boarding. The record will also include:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the complaints procedure in writing means by letter or by email.

- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- A clear account of what action was taken as a result of the complaint.

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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. The record of formal complaints will be held by the Bursar who will report any formal complaints to Governors at termly meetings.

Informal complaints and resolutions will be recorded on the pupil's pastoral incident template for management purposes and to enable patterns of concern to be monitored. Complaints relating to the provision of boarding will also be recorded in the boarding house log for the purposes of monitoring and reporting to senior management. Formal complaints about boarding will be reported to the Charity Commission, as per the 'Commitment to Care Charter'.

**Notes:**

**WRITTEN COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS:** St John's College School will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. Complaints regarding the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.

**COMPLAINTS TO OFSTED REGARDING EYFS SERVICE PROVIDERS:** Where parents have complaints specifically about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements they may complain directly to Ofsted. Ofsted may be contacted at: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. General helpline 0300 123 1231; textphone no. 0161 618 8524 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

**COMPLAINTS TO ISI REGARDING EYFS SERVICE PROVIDERS:** Where parents have complaints specifically about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements they may also complain to ISI if they wish. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or by post: Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

**COMPLAINTS REGARDING BOARDING:** As ISI is the inspectorate for boarding, parents of boarders may now contact ISI rather than Ofsted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or by post: Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

Formal complaints recorded 2017 – 2018: 3