

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE for Parents

Date of Issue:	September 2016
Date of Review:	April 2017
Responsible Person:	Finance Director
References:	The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards,

This procedure is available on the Policies page of the School website and is referred to in the annual *Parent Handbook*.

1 INTRODUCTION

St John's School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, the School will ensure it is taken seriously and is handled in accordance with this procedure.

A complaint or concern is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School. The School aims to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so and that the School will listen and take complaints seriously;
- The response to a complaint is made within a reasonable timescale;
- A thorough and impartial investigation is carried out with sensitivity;
- Appropriate action is taken and records retained.

The Pupil Complaints Procedure is printed in the annual *Pupil Handbook* and is also on display on house noticeboards.

2 CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except in as far as is required of the School by part 7, paragraph 33(k) of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

3 STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- A parent may raise a complaint regarding a wide variety of matters. The School will treat all complaints seriously and aims to resolve them quickly and informally.
- If a parent has a complaint, they should contact their child's Housemaster/Housemistress. It is anticipated that in many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department or the Head or Deputy Head.
- The member of staff will keep a record of the details of the complaint and the date on which they were received and feedback will be given to the parent.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or such longer period as mutually agreed by the parent and the member of staff, or in the event of failure to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to pursue their complaint formally in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

4 STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head or another senior member of staff will arrange to speak to or meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter within 10 working days of receiving the complaint in writing or such longer period as mutually agreed by the parent and the member of staff. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head or another senior member of staff 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 no more than 28 days of receipt of the complaint by the Head. The Head will also give reasons for the decision. Any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term may take longer to resolve due to the School holidays. In these circumstances the Head will agree with the complainant when to expect the decision.
- A summary of the complaint, the outcome and any actions taken will be recorded on the School's central record of complaints.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the resolution, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

5 STAGE 3 – COMPLAINTS PANEL (“PANEL”) HEARING

- If, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution under Stage 2, parents wish to request a Panel hearing they should make the request in writing to the Head within five working days of receiving the decision under Stage 2. The request will normally be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2 are completed and the Panel will only consider areas of complaint which have been previously raised in earlier Stages. The request will be referred to the Secretary to the Council (“the Secretary”) who has been appointed by the School's Governing Council to call hearings of the Panel.
- On behalf of the Panel the Secretary will acknowledge the request in writing within two working days of receiving the request and schedule a hearing to take place normally within 15 working days of receiving the request or such longer period as mutually agreed with the parent.
- The matter will then be referred to the Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint: two members of the Governing Council and one who shall be independent of the management and running of the School.
- Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Secretary following Department for Education guidance on the selection of an independent Panel member.
- 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 three working days prior to the hearing.
- Parents may choose to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If parents do wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, they must notify the School at least five working days prior to the hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will reach a decision immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and the hearing will be adjourned. Parents will be informed of the process and timescale, and if appropriate, will be provided with copies of material relevant to the complaint.
- After establishing the facts and giving them due consideration, the Panel will reach a decision to either uphold or dismiss the complaint and may make recommendations to the Head or the Governing Council as appropriate.
- If possible, the parents will be informed immediately of the decision and any recommendations that the Panel may make. The Panel will write to the parents within five working days to confirm its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Head, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

- A summary of the complaint, the outcome and any actions taken will be recorded on the School's central record of complaints.

6 CENTRAL RECORD OF COMPLAINTS

A written central record of each formal complaint is kept by the School for a period of three years and will include:

- whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Stage 3 Panel hearing; and
- actions taken by the School as a result of the complaint

7 USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

- The School staff are contactable via 01372 373 000 or school@stjohns.surrey.sch.uk. The number of complaints registered in the previous academic year under the formal stages of this procedure will be supplied to parents on request to the Secretary to Council.
- Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

The School is inspected by the ISI and parents can contact an inspector concerning any complaint or concern, including pupil welfare, at the address below. The ISI will usually expect the School's formal complaints procedure to have been followed prior to contacting them.

ISI
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 7600 0100
Email: info@isi.net or concerns@isi.net

- Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs)

The local authority provides designated officers (LADOs) who manage allegations against individuals who work or volunteer with children in Surrey. The Surrey LADO can be contacted on 0300 123 1650 or LADO@surreycc.gov.uk.