

Complaints Procedures

Parental Complaints

This procedure is printed in the annual *Handbook for Parents & Guardians*.

a. INTRODUCTION

St John's School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, should the standard of care fall below what is expected, the School will ensure any complaint is taken seriously and is handled in accordance with the recommendations laid out in The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.

The School will seek to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- response to a complaint is made within a reasonable timescale and in a courteous, efficient manner;
- parents realise that the School will listen and take complaints seriously;
- action will be taken where appropriate.

b. CONFIDENTIALITY

You can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by Part 7 paragraph 25(k) of the Independent Schools Inspectorate's Regulatory Requirements 2010; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

c. STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If you have a complaint, you should contact your child's Housemaster/Housemistress by telephone or email. Please be clear about the issue that is troubling you, so that the member of staff may respond appropriately. It is anticipated that in many cases the matter will be satisfactorily resolved in this way. If the Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress unless the Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Housemaster/Housemistress will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date(s) on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days or in the event that you and the Housemaster/Housemistress fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then you will be advised to proceed with your complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

d. STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will arrange to meet with you, normally within 7 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 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 you will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- If you are still not satisfied with the decision, you should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

e. STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

- If you seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), you will be referred to the Bursar who has been appointed by the Governing Council to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least 3 persons who were not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint: 2 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 Chairman of Governors. The Bursar, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, and normally within 14 working days.

* In accordance with DfE guidance, the School will endeavour to appoint an independent panel member who is a retired business person or civil servant, a Head or senior member of staff at another School, a retired member of the Police Force or legal profession, who is not, and never has been, associated with St John's School.

- 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 3 working days prior to the hearing.
- You may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve your complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. You will be informed of the process and timescale, and if appropriate, will be provided with copies of material relevant to the complaint.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision. If possible, you will be informed of the decision immediately, and any recommendations that the Panel may make. The Panel will then write to you within 4 working days informing you of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and

recommendations, if any, will also be sent in writing to the Head, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

f. OFSTED

Should you wish to discuss your complaint further you may wish to contact the Ofsted Complaints Investigation & Enforcement Team:

Ofsted CIE Team
The North Regional Centre
3rd Floor, Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
Tel: 08456 404040
Fax: 0161 618 8509
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The local authority provides designated officers, LADOs, who can be contacted for consultation about any allegation against an adult who works with children in the School, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, where it is alleged that that person has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

Independent Schools LADO: Elizabeth Pollard 01372 833342

g. RECORD OF COMPLAINT

A written record of formal complaints, and whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a panel hearing, is kept by the School; it is reviewed regularly by the Headmaster.

Pupil Complaints

This procedure is printed in the annual *Pupil Handbook* and is also on display on house noticeboards.

If you wish to make a complaint then there is a procedure for this. The complaint may be against another pupil or a member of staff. The first thing to do is to talk to a member of the staff you can trust - ideally but not necessarily a member of your House staff. If you want support when you make your complaint then you can take with you a friend or a member of staff. Hopefully the matter can be settled to your satisfaction by your Housemaster/mistress but if not you can then make a formal complaint. This is done as follows:

1. You tell your Housemaster/mistress that you wish to make a formal complaint.
2. Your complaint will be entered into the Complaints file kept by the Deputy Headmaster in his office.
3. You will receive an email from the Deputy Headmaster within two school days; this is to inform you that the matter is in hand.
4. You will be then asked to talk to the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster or both. You can take someone with you to this meeting to give you support. If after two

further days the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction you should contact any member of staff you wish.

5. The person you have chosen to contact will talk to you about what you want to do next. By now your complaint will have been discussed at the highest level, will have been officially registered and, we hope, resolved in a fair and just manner. Any further action will be something you will have to talk about with your chosen contact.

Hopefully, matters will never need to go this far. But do not be afraid to complain. Remember, too, you do not have to inform the person you are complaining about that you have made a complaint.

You will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.