



Complaints policy

Independent School Standards	Paragraphs 32(3), 33 and 34.
Number of complaints registered and resolved under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding year	1
Last updated by senior leaders	November 2020
Last reviewed by external consultant	May 2021
Next review due	May 2022

1 Introduction

1.1 At St. John's, we strive to provide a good education for all our children. Senior leaders and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

1.2 We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures laid down below, which are based on Paragraph 33 of the independent school standards.

1.3 A complaints' Panel including an Independent Schools Standards Consultant has been formed to deal with any complaint that **reaches stage 3 of this policy**. The members of the Complaints Panel are entirely independent of the management and running of the school and will have had no prior involvement in the complaint put before them.

2 Aims

2.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints internally, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding, as it is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. In all cases we put the interests of the pupil above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3 The process

Stage 1 - Informal

3.1 If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the child's class teacher and/or Head of Year. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each pupil is happy at school and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects his or her progress. After an initial meeting, the issues will be logged and a date will be set to resolve the matter.

3.2 If the complaint is about the conduct of another pupil, and it seems that the conduct complained about amounts to bullying, then the matter will be dealt with by the class teacher under the School's Bullying Policy. However, if the complaint relates to another pupil in the class being disruptive, then the teacher concerned will investigate the matter and deal with it under the guidelines set down in the School's Behaviour Policy.

3.3 If the complaint is about a staff member, the complaint should initially be made again on an informal basis by meeting with the person concerned and/or the Head of Year, Form Teacher or a senior leader, in order that the situation can be clarified and resolved as quickly as possible.

3.4 In some cases the staff member concerned may need time to investigate the complaint. If the matter cannot be resolved immediately then we nevertheless aim to respond within 5 school days.

Stage 2 - Formal

3.5 Ultimately, we hope that all cases of complaints can be dealt with quickly and efficiently under stage 1. However, where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the form teacher and/or the Head of Year, or that the complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with a relevant senior leader (unless the complaint is against the Head Teacher or Principal, when stage 3 will apply).

3.6 A Deputy Head, the Head Teacher or the Principal will consider any such complaint and will acknowledge the complaint orally through a meeting with the parents, or in writing and will aim to resolve the matter within 5 school days of the complaint being made. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date. Each case will be investigated thoroughly and, if applicable, witnesses will be interviewed, and statements will be taken from those involved. We keep accurate written records of all meetings. Once the relevant facts have been established, they will give a response to the parent either orally or in writing if a meeting is not possible. Any written response will include a full explanation of the decision and the reason for it, including where appropriate, any action that the School will take. The complainant will also be informed that, should he or she wish to take the complaint further, he or she should notify the Complaints Panel in writing within 2 weeks.

Stage 3 – Formal (Complaints Panel)

3.7 Only if stages 1 and 2 have been exhausted and the complaint remains unresolved should a complaint be made to the Complaints Panel. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this complaint to the chair of the Panel, whose address is available from the School Office.

3.8 The Panel will consider and fully investigate all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting, with a third party if they so wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The school gives the complainant at least five working days' notice of the date of the meeting.

3.9 After hearing all the evidence, the Panel will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The members of the Panel do all they can to resolve the complaint in a fair manner. The Panel will make findings and recommendations and the complainant, proprietor/Principal, head teacher and where relevant the person complained about, will receive a copy of its findings and recommendations within five working days.

4 Monitoring and Review

4.1 If complaints are to contribute to raising the quality of education, they need to be recorded and monitored regularly. The class teachers or Heads of Year log all communications received by them and record how complaints have been resolved and at which stage this has taken place. All conversations and correspondence are kept confidential. Senior leaders examine these logs on a weekly basis. An online log of formal complaints is maintained.

4.2 Leaders take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.