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St Paul's Cathedral School Complaints Policy and Procedures

**(Notes to Staff about parent/pupil complaints, and
Guidance for Pupils & Parents)**

**June 2019
January 2020**

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

St Paul's Cathedral School is a Christian, co-educational community which holds to the values of love, justice, tolerance, respect, honesty, service and trust in its life and practice, to promote positive relationships throughout the school community and where the safety, welfare and emotional well-being of each child is of the utmost importance.

The school aims to instil a love of learning through a broad curriculum. It aims to give each pupil the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially, personally, physically, culturally and spiritually. All pupils are encouraged to work to the best of their ability and to achieve standards of excellence in all of their endeavours.

Through the corporate life of the school, and through good pastoral care, the school encourages the independence of the individual as well as mutual responsibility. It aims to make its pupils aware of the wider community, espouses the democratic process and encourages a close working relationship with parents and guardians.

Guidelines for Complaints and Concerns

The Nature of Complaints

There are essentially four areas of potential complaint: parents, pupils, the public and staff. There are procedures for staff complaints. This document deals mainly with procedures for parents and pupils. Complaints from the public will be dealt with in a similar way, although these would normally be referred directly to the Headmaster.

Parental Complaints and Concerns

Problems are likely to arise if parents feel that the school is not open to their concerns. It is better to have a direct complaint to a member of staff than to have parents sharing their dissatisfaction with others.

An effective complaints procedure can defuse problems and can provide the school with helpful information. Complaints treated as constructive suggestions can be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for further complaint. Even an unjustified complaint may indicate an area that can be improved.

All complaints need to be handled seriously. An unresolved problem may become a festering dispute or a confrontation.

Officially, a complaint has to trigger the complaints policy. Otherwise, it can be treated as a concern.

Complaints may not be raised once a pupil is no longer on the school roll. In very rare cases, pupils sometimes leave the school because parents have felt unable to raise their concerns. This document aims to reassure parents and pupils that it is much better to communicate openly and constructively with the school as soon as possible and so avoid disruption to the pupil's education.

See Parental Complaints Policy (follows)

Lines of Approach

All members of staff should be encouraged to deal with parental concerns that lie within their area of responsibility. They should make sure that others know, too. In most cases it is advisable to have another member of staff with you when discussing a complaint or serious concern with parents.

If approached about a matter that lies outside their remit, staff should refer it to the appropriate person and inform the parents.

Senior staff will recognise when issues need to go straight to the Headmaster, with whom the responsibility for most complaints lies.

Certain parents will wish to go straight to the Headmaster with a complaint or concern and this should be respected. However, it should be explained that he may not be able to respond until he has consulted staff who can help.

You should inform the Headmaster and appropriate Deputy of any complaint or concern you receive.

Reducing Anxiety

Because the person making the complaint may feel vulnerable, the school can reduce anxiety by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled.

Information about the complaints procedure should be clear.

Complaints should be acknowledged as soon as possible and certainly no later than forty-eight hours. Staff should inform parents if a more detailed response is needed and by what date it will be received. The issue should be dealt with as soon as possible.

The nature of the complaint and what is concerning the parents should be made clear. If it is not immediately obvious, they may need more time to explain. They could be asked to put their complaint in writing. Parents need to feel their views matter.

Recording

All complaints and other parental concerns other than those resolved informally, must be logged.

Confidential files need to be kept together. They should contain simple, clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. The notes can be agreed with the parents. There are two files in the Headmaster's office: one called Parental Concerns and the other Parental Complaints.

Pupil Complaints Procedure

Are you being treated fairly?

What to do if you want to make a suggestion or have a problem.

Do you have any suggestions or problems?

If so, the school would like to hear.

How do you make a suggestion or raise a problem?

By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier. You can do it by yourself, or as part of your group, or through your parents.

To whom?

To anyone on the staff or to a senior pupil if you prefer.

Does it matter what the issue is?

No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

What will happen next?

If possible the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

Do others have to know?

If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff – they will understand.

All members of staff at St Paul's Cathedral School are concerned about your happiness and safety at school. We are here to help.

If you would like to speak to someone who is not a member of staff you could contact the **School Chaplain, Rev Paula Hollingsworth**. The phone number for **Childline** can be found posted up in the school (**0800 1111**).

Parent Complaint Policy Preamble

St Paul's Cathedral School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. This paper will show you how to use our complaints procedure. It recognises Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

The procedure applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response. Complaints must be made while a pupil is registered on the school roll.

Allegations made against the school in the case of historical (non-recent) abuse will trigger the involvement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously;
- we take action where appropriate

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Knowledge of complaints will be limited to the Head and those directly involved. **It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not affect their children adversely.** We cannot entirely rule out the need for third parties outside the school to be involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. You will be fully informed. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as in so far required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection: or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The form of resolution may be at the discretion of the Head. For example, a complaint may require an enquiry, and still be resolved informally. While the complainant may deem the concern Stage 1, the Head may determine the concern to warrant Stage 2 procedure.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, any member of staff will be happy to help. You can talk directly to a member of staff, write a letter, email, or telephone. It may be best to start with your child's Form Teacher or Tutor, or with the person most closely connected with the issue – for instance the head of games for sports matters, the Head of Boarding for boarding issues or nurses for medical issues. In the Pre-Prep, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, it is best to start with your child's form teacher or the head of Pre-Prep. However, you may prefer to take the matter to the Deputy Head or Head.
- Complaints made directly to a member of staff will usually be referred to the Headmaster unless the member of staff deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff or Headmaster will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 48 hours if practical, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. He will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, normally within a week of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter and the way in which matters will proceed. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage, normally within 14 working days of the receipt of the complaint, but no more than 28 days.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), the Headmaster will refer the matter to the Chair of Governors.
- The Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and set up a panel to hear the evidence for the complaint with you.. It is hoped that this panel will be able to resolve the complaint. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would be inappropriate.
- If the panel meeting does not bring about a resolution, the matter would be referred to the school's Conciliation Committee, which consists of members of the school's Governing Body and an independent member who is independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the panel members will be appointed by the Chair of Governors and will consist of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, or where on the initial panel.
- The Conciliation Committee will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as possible and normally within 14 days.
- It is the committee's task to look at the issues impartially and confidentially.
- If the committee 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 4 days prior to the hearing.
- One other person may accompany the parents to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the committee will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the committee will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the committee will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 days of the hearing. The decision of the

committee is final. The Chair of the committee will write to the parents informing them of the decision and the reasons for it. The committee's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person of whom the complaint is made.

Record

A record will be kept of all Stage 2 or Stage 3 concerns and complaints, and will indicate whether complaints are resolved.

Records will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher

A record will be kept of all action taken by the school as a result of complaints regardless of whether they are upheld.

Correspondance, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting and inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Following EYFS guidance, the record of complaints is kept for three years or until the next inspection, which ever is the greater.

The complainant will be notified within 28 days of the outcome of any investigation in the Early Years Foundation Stage,

A record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted on request.

Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage may contact Ofsted or ISI if they believe the school has not met the EYFS requirements:

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House

9-12 Long Lane

London

EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 0207 600 0100

info@isi.net

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

General helpline: 0300 123 1231;

Textphone number: 0161 618 8524

Note: One complaint in the summer term 2019 treated as Stage 2, although referred to the Chair of Governors was resolved. One complaint treated by the Headmaster as Stage two in the Autumn term 2019 has been resolved.

Reviewed October 2014
Updated September 2015
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Updated May 2017
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