



St Christopher's School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Action	Policy to be reviewed annually		
	Owner	Date	Completed
Review	Sandrine Paillasse	September 2020	✓
Approved	Board of Governors	November 2020	✓

To be published on	
School network	✓
School website	✓
ISI portal	✓

St Christopher's School – Complaints Procedure – September 2020

This procedure applies equally to the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as taught at St Christopher's school

1. Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and learning, and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents wish to make representations or have a formal complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. This procedure is available for parents on request and on the website.

2. What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction concerning a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, 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 something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for their daughter and they can be assured that their daughter will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their daughter raises in good faith. The school will always seek to deal with any concerns or representations as quickly as possible in order to reach an amicable resolution. Where formal complaints arise, the school will respond within the time scales set out in this policy unless further time is needed to conduct a thorough investigation. In these circumstances parents will be advised of any modified time scale to investigate the complaint.

3. Stages

- Stage 1: informal raising of a complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff
- Stage 2: a form complaint in writing to the Head
- Stage 3: a reference to the Appeal Panel

4. Usual Timeframe for dealing with complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days (Monday to Friday) if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (parents will be advised of revised timings). It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (parents will be advised of revised timings).

5. Complaints relating to the EYFS

Any complaints regarding the EYFS will be investigated and complainants will be notified of the outcome within 28 days. Details of Ofsted and ISI are available at the end of this document and

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parents can contact those authorities if they believe the school is not meeting EYFS requirements.

6. **Recording complaints**

All complaints whether formal or as early representations will be logged to include the date of the concern/issue, how it was investigated and the outcome (with dates). The aim is to ensure that school leaders and governors can maintain an overview of all representations and complaints and any significant patterns of concern, which may be arising. This is seen as being particularly important in the context of child protection. The school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. The school will also keep a written record of the action taken by the school as a result those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Records will also include:

- 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 conversation)

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.

7. **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, whether it relates to education issues, pastoral care of disciplinary matter, they should normally contact their daughter's form teacher/subject teacher. The member of staff contacted will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, email or letter within five working days of receipt during term time. In the holidays, the acknowledgement will be made as soon as is practicable and not later than five working days beyond the start of the next term or half term.
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher or subject teacher cannot resolve the matter alone they will consult the Head who will then agree the next course of action in order to respond to the complainant.
- A query/complaint relating to financial matters such as fees or extras should be raised in the first instance with the Bursar.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of Department or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or subject teacher unless the Head of Department/the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The form teacher or subject teacher will enter a written record on CPOMS of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days, or in the event that the form teacher or subject teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents must make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors who will agree the process for investigation in accordance with this policy and the timescales therein.

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8. 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 Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 14 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, or a member of staff designated by the Head, to carry out further investigations. The school will treat complaints in as confidential a manner as possible. Discussions of the case will be limited to the Head, those that she needs to consider, and she may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator or may involve one or more Governors.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The Head will review the outcome of the investigation. Once she 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 within 25 working days from the receipt of the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for her decision.
- Any complaint submitted within a month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve due to the school holidays and unavailability of staff. In these circumstances, the resolution will be communicated to parents within 25 working days of the start of the new term or half term.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will agree the process for investigation and 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.**

9. Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Bursar within five working days of the Head's decision. The Bursar has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the appeal panel. Requests will usually only be considered if the procedures for an informal (stage 1) and a then formal complaint (stage 2) have been completed. A copy of all relevant documents and the parents' full contact details should accompany the letter to the Bursar. The Bursar will acknowledge this request within 5 working days. Requests received during half terms or school holidays will be responded to as soon as practicable and in any case within five working days of the start of the new term or half term. If assistance is required, for example, because of a disability, the Bursar will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- The matter will then be referred to the appeal panel, appointed by the Governors, for consideration. The panel will consist of two Governors who are independent of the complaint and a person who is independent of the school and complaint and who has appropriate background and experience. The Bursar, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.

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- 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.
- As soon as reasonably practical and in any event, at least seven working days before the hearing, the Bursar will send the parents a notification of the date, time, and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the panel members who will be present.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or a friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate on either side.
- If the parents decide not to attend the hearing, the panel hearing will still go ahead to consider the parents' complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint (unless the parents indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further).
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out and parents advised of the process and time scale.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will make findings and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 days of the hearing.
- Findings and recommendations of the panel hearing are available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and Head.
- The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it normally within 14 days of the hearing. **The decision of the panel will be final.** The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept for 3 years and confidentially except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

A written record will be kept of the action taken by the School as a result of any complaint that reaches stage 2, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

Any complaint concerning a child in the Early Years Foundation Stage (our Reception class) will be investigated within 28 days and kept as a record for at least 3 years and it may also be referred, if the parent wishes, to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (tel 020 7600 0100) First Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or to info@isi.net . or OFSTED on 0300 123 466 OR 0300 123 1231 , Address: OFSTED, National Business Centre, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street Manchester, M1 2WD

Availability of this policy

A copy of this policy may be downloaded from our website <https://www.stchristophers.london/policies> or is available on request from the school office, St Christopher's School, 32 Belsize Lane, NW3 5AE (020 7435 1521). This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Parental Complaint Form

Member of staff receiving the complaint:

From (name of parent):

Name of pupil and class:

Date/Time of complaint:

Complaint:

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Action taken:

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Outcome:

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Issue passed to: **Date/Time:**

Seen:

Senior member of staff (Name):**Date/Time:**

Head: