

Charitable Objects of St. Catherine's School - The Objects for which the Company is established are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by providing, conducting, governing, carrying on and maintaining in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a boarding or day school or schools for girls in which the teaching shall be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – Whole School



The Whole School refers to all staff and students in the St. Catherine's Preparatory and Senior Schools which includes: the Early Years/Foundation Stage (EYFS), Pre-Prep School (Key Stage 1), Prep. School (Key Stage 2); Middle School (Key Stage 3); Senior School (Key Stage 4) and the Sixth Form (Key Stage 5).

This policy was reviewed in January 2023. It replaces that which was first published in 2004 and reviewed in 2009, 2010, 2012, and annually thereafter.

Introduction

St Catherine's has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if pupils or parents do have a concern/complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure which is available to parents on the school's website and as a hard copy on request from the School.

As a School we have a genuine commitment to listening to feedback and regularly say that girls and parents should bring their concerns to us quickly so that all issues can be addressed in a timely manner, thus removing any anxieties. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is considered to be a complaint.

We are also required by legislation governing schools' complaints policies to state clearly here that *"Within boarding and in relation to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, No. 14 this policy is also for staff, boarders and parents. This policy also takes account of the particular needs, within the whole-school complaints procedure, for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)."*

[Note: National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 is published by the Department for Education]

In the following sections, the term 'Head' relates to either the Headmistress of the Preparatory School or the Headmistress of the Senior School as appropriate.

Pupils' Concerns/Complaints

In the first instance pupils who have any concerns or complaints should talk to:

- In the Senior school – the subject teacher, form tutor or housemistress
 - In the Prep school: FI-LIII – the class teacher or tutor
 - In the Pre-Prep: EYFS, PPII, PPIII – the class teacher, teaching assistant or tutor
 - For boarding matters (Senior School only) – the girl's boarding housemistress
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- If the resolution needed is more complex, issues may then be passed on to the Headmistress or one of her Senior Management Team.
 - A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
 - Pupils and parents will always be kept informed, both of how the matter has been investigated and of the resolution.
 - There should be an agreed resolution within 28 days (excluding weekends and school holidays).
 - If parents wish to pursue their daughter's complaint directly with the School, the procedure for parents described below will apply.

Parents' Concerns /Complaints

Stage 1 – Initial complaint/concern raised informally

- It is hoped that most concerns/complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents/guardians have a concern/complaint, they should contact their daughter's Form Teacher/Housemistress in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her to consult:
 1. In the Preparatory School: Deputy Head (Pre-Prep)/ Deputy Head (Curriculum)/ Deputy Head (Staff)/ the Head
 2. In the Senior School: A Head of Department/ Senior School Housemistress/ Head of 6th Form/ Director of Studies/ Senior Boarding Housemistress/ the Head
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Deputy Head/Director of Studies/Head will usually be shared also with the relevant Form Teacher/Housemistress unless the Head of Department/Deputy Head of Curriculum/Deputy Head of Staff/Director of Studies/ Head of Boarding and Deputy Head of Pre-Prep/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. On a day-to-day matter, it is the Form Teacher/Housemistress who has the closest knowledge of each girl's academic progress, activities and wellbeing.
- We will endeavour to acknowledge such letters, emails or telephone calls within 48 hours of their receipt (excluding weekends and school holidays) and to inform parents of how we intend to investigate the matter.
- A written record will be made of all concerns/complaints and the date on which they were received and stored in the girl's file.
- A letter or email will always be written to parents, or a telephone call made, to conclude a matter, indicating how the issue has been dealt with and the outcome reached.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days (excluding weekends and school holidays) or in the event that the Form Teacher/Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents/guardians are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint to the Head of Senior or Preparatory School

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents/guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Head formally. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet/speak to the parents/guardians concerned, within 7 days of receiving the complaint (excluding weekends and school holidays), 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 which may take longer. A timeframe would be agreed to enable this.
- 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 the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and/or actions agreed, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing within 28 days of receipt of the written complaint (excluding weekends and school holidays). The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents/guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within 14 working days (excluding weekends and school holidays).

Stage 3 – Formal Complaint to Request a Panel Hearing

- If parents/guardians seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should approach the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel to whom the matter will be referred for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 days (excluding weekends and school holidays).
- 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 5 days prior to the hearing. After that time, it will not be possible to table additional papers for consideration by the Panel.
- The parents/guardians 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.
- It is a mandatory requirement for the panel to consider the complaint, with or without the attendance of parents, unless the parents decide that they no longer wish to proceed.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/guardians' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and recommendations and will make recommendations within 7 days of the Hearing (excluding weekends). The Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings, if any, and recommendations, will be sent in writing or electronically to the parents/guardians, the relevant Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about within 28 days (excluding weekends and school holidays) of receipt of the written complaint reaching the Complaints Panel. In exceptional circumstances where there may be more evidence to consider or further investigations required, this may take longer and if so, the Panel will inform the parents of a revised timeframe. Findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher
- Parents can be assured that all formal complaints at this level will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Secretary of State, or where a regulatory body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them and where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- Records of all formal complaints will be kept confidentially on file indicating whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing; and action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage regulations, written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The School will provide ISI and OFSTED, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Important Contact Details for more serious complaints should parents wish to raise them with the external regulatory body.

The contact details for ISI are:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100
Fax 020 7776 8849

e-mail address : concerns@isi.net

The contact details for OFSTED are:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 1234 666

e-mail address : enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Contact details for The Department for Education (DfE) are:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education

Signed:
Mrs A M Phillips
Headmistress

Signed:
Miss N Bartholomew
Headmistress of Preparatory School

Dated:

THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY.

Records of Formal Complaints (Stage 3) are recorded by the Clerk to the Governors in a bound book and are published on the School's website via this policy:

In the academic year 2021-2022 we received 1 complaint at Stage 3.