



P11 - Complaints

Policy Owner: Head of group

ISSR Reference: 33a complaints procedure

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Version Control Information

Reason for Amendment	Role	Date	Main Changes
Annual review	Head of St Dunstan's Education Group	Michaelmas 2024	New template No material amendments necessary

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1. Aims

St Dunstan’s Education Group (‘the Group’) aims to ensure that parents / carers in contract with the Group:

- Understand how they can raise concerns or complaints
- Understand how they can escalate concerns or complaints if they do not feel that their concern has been handled to their satisfaction
- Feel able to raise a concern or complaint in line with this policy without fear of being seen as a troublemaker.

2. Legislation

This policy is based on the expectations laid out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and references the Independent Schools Standards and Regulations (ISSRs). Complaints relating to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision can also be directed to Ofsted and by doing so operate on different timelines to the ones outlined in this policy.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 St Dunstan’s Education Group

The governing body has ultimate responsibility for the management and control of its schools, but delegates day-to-day oversight to the Head of St Dunstan’s Education Group (Head of the Group), who turn line manages the Heads of each school, specifically the Head of Rosemead Preparatory School and Nursery, the Head of St Dunstan’s Junior School and the Head of St Dunstan’s Senior School. This policy reflects that structure.

The governing body has a duty to:

- Review this policy annually and ensure it adheres to the ISSRs

- Ensure that each school follows what is articulated within this framework
- Manage Stage Three complaints, as coordinated by the Clerk to Governors.

3.2 The Head of the Group

The Head of the Group is responsible for overseeing the work of the Head of each school and their management of concerns under Stage One of this policy. The Head of the Group will oversee all Stage Two complaints.

3.3 The Head of Rosemead Preparatory School and Nursery, the Head of St Dunstan's Junior School and the Head of St Dunstan's Senior School

The Heads of each school will oversee the concerns being managed within their team and will endeavour to train and empower their teams to resolve concerns promptly and prevent escalation.

3.4 Staff

All staff are responsible for understanding this policy and their role in managing concerns under Stage One of the policy.

3.5 Pupils and parents/carers

Pupils and parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that concerns and complaints are raised in a timely manner and in accordance with this policy.

4. The Procedure

4.1 Overview

The Complaints Policy applies to past pupils, only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school.

Parents wishing to appeal a fixed term exclusion of over five days, a permanent exclusion or a required removal should instead refer to our Exclusions and Required Removal policy as there is a separate procedure to follow.

Where referred to this in this document, a 'school day' is considered to be a day when the respective school to which the complaint relates is in session.

If a concern or complaint is raised during a holiday period, or over a weekend, it should not be

expected that it will be handled until the school resumes. If concerns or complaints are raised in the final days of a school term, it may well be that the concern is noted and acknowledged but that it will be considered only when the school returns to session, albeit adhering to the timelines set out in this policy.

Written records are kept of all Stage Two and Stage Three complaints and also for the majority of concerns, especially where they have been escalated to the Head of the school. The written records of Stage Two and Stage Three complaints include the steps that were taken and whether or not they were resolved and at what point in the process, and any actions taken by the school as the result of the complaint, regardless of whether it is upheld.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State, or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act (2008) requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Each school will have its own framework for where to direct specific concerns and to whom. This information will ordinarily be held on the respective parent portal. This is a useful first reference point for parents / carers wish to raise an initial concern.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 school days. Although the ISI is responsible for inspecting the Early Years setting, parents and carers should be aware that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint concerning Early Years provision, they are entitled to make a complaint directly to Ofsted. An Ofsted leaflet about 'Complaints to Ofsted about schools: Guidance for parents' can be obtained from www.ofsted.gov.uk

This policy is structured into three stages:

- Stage One: Informal resolution
- Stage Two: Formal resolution
- Stage Three: Panel hearing

4.2 Stage One: Informal resolution

It is hoped, and expected, that the majority of concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents / carers have a concern, in the first instance they should normally contact the most appropriate member of staff in the school, which is often the class teacher or tutor. In most cases, the matter will then be resolved promptly. However, if the concern cannot be resolved, it may be necessary for parents / carers to escalate their concern and consult with a member of the appropriate school leadership team, and for follow-up conversations to be held online, or in person.

Should the matter not be resolved by the school leadership team, and the parents / carers fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, they will be advised that their concern can be considered by the Head

of the school. In the majority of cases this will involve a meeting to discuss the matter, which will normally be arranged within five school days of the concerns being forwarded.

The Head of the school will review the concern and take remedial actions to try to resolve the matter. The outcome of this review will be a written response that will be communicated to parents / carers, normally within five school days of the concern being heard. Should the parents / carers feel the matter is still not resolved, then they will be advised to proceed with a formal complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this policy.

4.3 Stage Two: Formal resolution

If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents / carers can put a complaint in writing to the Head of the Group. This complaint should seek to detail:

- Why, in the view of the parents / carers, the Head of the school has not satisfactorily resolved their concerns
- Any areas of policy or procedure that the parents / carers believe have not been correctly followed
- What the parents / carers wish the outcome of their complaint to be.

In most cases, the Head of the Group will meet the parents concerned normally within five school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter online or in person. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. However, it may be necessary for the Head of the Group to carry out an investigation.

The Head of the Group will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the investigation. The Head of the Group will write a full summary of the investigation and its findings in relation to the complaint once they are satisfied that, so far as is practicable, they are in possession of the relevant facts. Parents / carers will be informed of the Head of the Group's decision, normally within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. The Head of Group will always give reasons for their decision. Ordinarily, this letter will be accompanied by an opportunity to meet with the Head of the Group to discuss the outcomes, either online or in person.

If the parents / carers are still not satisfied with the decision, then they will be advised to proceed with Stage Three of this policy.

4.4 Stage Three: Formal resolution

Parents / carers can proceed to Stage Three by writing to the Clerk to Governors, within 15 school days of receiving the outcome of the Stage Two investigation, as presented by the Head of the

Group. The Clerk to Governors has been appointed by the governing body to call hearings of the complaints panel ('the panel).

Stage Three complaints must be raised in a timely manner (this time period is to be at the reasonable discretion of the panel) and by no later than fifteen school days after the notification date of the Stage Two resolution.

The matter will then be referred to the panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the panel members will be appointed by the governing body, normally the Chair of the governing body, working in conjunction with the Clerk to Governors.

The Clerk to Governors, on behalf of the panel, will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 school days of the receipt of the Stage Three complaint. Where several parent / carer complaints arise from a common issue, it is feasible that the common point could be jointly heard by the panel.

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 panel hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to parties no later than ten school days prior to the hearing.

Parents / carers 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 the complaint of the parents / carers immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how this investigation should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts that they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten school days of the relevant hearing. The decision of the panel is final. The panel's findings and its recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents / carers, the Head of the Group, the Head of the school and all members of the governing body. These findings and recommendations will be available on the school premises for the purposes of inspection.

5. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of the Group annually.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

The number and nature of complaints and any associated trends are scrutinized by the governing body on an annual basis. In the 2023/24 school year, two formal complaints were received across the schools under Stage Two and Stage Three of the Complaints Policy.

6. Links with other policies

This Complaints Policy links to the following policies:

- The Pupil Exclusions Policy