



ST PAUL'S ACADEMY

St. Paul's Academy

Complaints Procedure

Review Date: October 2023

Member of Leadership responsible: Principal

1. Principles

The School Complaints Procedure sets out to ensure that:

- the School listens and acts on complaints
- all complaints are investigated impartially, thoroughly, fairly and promptly
- wherever possible, the School will find a resolution
- complainants will not suffer as a result of a complaint.

This procedure is not intended to replace the normal discussions regarding problems and concerns which take place in school on a day-to-day basis. It is only where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions that further steps may need to be taken. This procedure applies to all staff.

2. Definition of Complaints

In most cases, concerns will be dealt with by staff before they reach the stage of a formal complaint. Where a complaint is made, it is helpful if staff record the steps taken to resolve the issue informally and to keep notes of discussions. However, it is recognised that teachers do not want to discourage parents from voicing concerns by formally logging every issue raised. It is for the school staff to determine how they wish to approach this issue.

3. Introduction

i. This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints.

ii. This procedure does not apply to issues concerning Admissions; Exclusions; Special Educational Provision; School reorganisation; Curriculum (including public examinations, school records on individual pupils, etc.); Grievances by Staff or Child Abuse. These matters are already provided for by existing statutory procedures, copies of which can be obtained from the School.

iii. All other complaints are handled by the School according to the arrangements set out below.

4. Aims and Objectives

The School will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. Sufficient opportunity will be provided for any complaint to be fully discussed with the aim of finding a resolution through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

5. Complaints Procedure

Most complaints are best dealt with informally. If you have a child at the school and your concern is about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with the relevant member of staff [Subject Teacher/ Head of Faculty/ Form Tutor/ Head of Year]. If you do not have a child at the school please discuss the matter with the Vice Principal.

Stage 1 – Informal

- i. If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the [Subject Teacher/ Head of Faculty/ Form Tutor/ Head of Year], or that the concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, please make an appointment to see the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal considers any such complaint very seriously and most complaints can be resolved at this stage.

Stage 2 – Formal

- ii. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, you (the complainant) should put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Principal, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that you consider should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.
- iii. An investigation will be carried out by either the Principal or one of the Assistant Principals, provided that they have not been involved up to this point. The scope of the investigation will be documented to ensure that all aspects are covered. The investigator will offer the complainant a meeting and will speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, the meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
- iv. The investigator will put their findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant. Any complaint relating to the Principal must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors (or Vice-chair in the absence of the Chair) who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a Governor to investigate in the same way as outlined above.

Stage 3 – Formal – Panel Hearing

- v. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the investigator, she/he may request that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body which will comprise a minimum of 3 people, at least 2 of which will be Governors and which will include one person who is independent of the management and running of the school. Members of the Panel will be appointed on the basis that they have no prior knowledge of the complaint. The request must be in writing, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors at the school, within 10 school days of the response from stage 2 being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
- vi. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days. Within 15 school days of receipt of the complainant's letter the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body together with the complainant and relevant representatives of the school. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the school and the members of the Panel. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will not be allowed.
- vii. The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not

introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to put its case and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel.

- viii. The Panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about - available for inspection on the school premises by the Trustees and the Principal.
- ix. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the Clerk to the Governors will notify all concerned.
- x. If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been completed and the matter closed.
- xi. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing
- xii. 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 Education Act 2008 requests access to them.
- xiii. The decision of the panel is final. If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body monitors the Complaints Procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal will log all formal complaints received by the School and record how they were resolved. Governors will examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

7. Availability

A copy of this procedure is available to all parents and members of the public on request and is published on the Academy's website.