

## 33a – COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### **Mission Statement**

We are an all-through, inclusive Catholic girls' school with boys in the Nursery. As a girls' school we are committed to preparing girls for life long effectiveness and success. As part of their journey, girls will learn of intellectual risk-taking and emotional strength, reflection and self-knowledge, persuasiveness and team building as well as a cultural curiosity for an enriched enjoyment of life.

In our stunning 13 acres of grounds, girls have a physical freedom unique in central London. We aim to instil in them the emotional freedom to grow intellectually and spiritually and to understand the truth about themselves, others and our complex world. We will give them the courage to be ambitious and compassionate and we will provide a secure, happy and nurturing community in which to explore all of the above.

To this end we seek, develop and retain the best teachers who value well-being and the individual progress of each girl as much as they are relentless in their pursuit of academic excellence. Their goal is life-long success for each girl and they set the pace of energy and dynamism within which the girls flourish.

This policy is for parents of all children in the whole school, including EYFS

### **Introduction**

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this Procedure, which will be made available to them on request to the School Office. A copy is displayed on the school website and parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

St Augustine's Priory will make available to the Chief Inspector or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act details of the correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with 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 so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

1. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. Most complaints don't go past this stage.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Key Worker in the Nursery or Form Teacher or Senior Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the issue to be raised with the Head of Preps and Pre-Preps, Deputy Head of Juniors or Seniors.
3. Complaints made directly to the Head, Head of Preps and Pre-Preps, Deputy Head Juniors or Seniors will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless they deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
4. The member of staff will make a written record of all complaints and their outcome and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within two weeks or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised by the member of staff to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.
5. A written record of all complaints is kept for at least three years whether they are resolved at this stage or proceed to subsequent stages.
6. If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution – First Stage**

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis with the member of staff or Head of Preps and Pre-Preps or Deputy Head Junior or Senior, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. Written complaints will be recorded in the Complaints book held by the school and will be normally acknowledged within two working days. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within six days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.

4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
5. Once the Head 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. The Head will also give reasons for the decision. Complainants will normally be notified of the outcome of any investigation within 14 working days of the school receiving a complaint.
6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
7. If the complaint is against the Head, this should be put in writing and the Head will reply in writing.

### **Stage 3 – Formal Resolution – Second Stage**

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors (Bursar), who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

1. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel 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 (normally two governors plus another person). Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and arrange a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.
2. The Panel may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all parties not later than seven days prior to the hearing.
3. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The panel will proceed without the parent(s) present if necessary to bring the matter to a conclusion.
4. The panel will not meet if the parent(s) indicate they are now satisfied and they do not want to proceed further.
5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

6. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
7. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of governors and the Head. The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- 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 conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

The school will record any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they were upheld.

Complaints Record 2015 – 2016 – No formal complaints

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will normally be acknowledged within two working days, if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. 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 each within 14 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday



periods. For Early Years Foundation children (Nursery and Prep 1) the investigation and outcome will be notified to the complainant within 14 working days.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will normally be completed within a further 14 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods or within 14 working days for EYFS children.

## **External Agencies**

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 6(3)(f) of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as subsequently amended); by the Secretary of State, or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority, in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London. EC1A 9HA  
020 7600 0100 or [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
<http://www.isi.net/complaintsprocedure/>

Parents may contact Ofsted if they have raised a concern with school about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements which has been submitted in writing, investigated and an outcome given within 28 days which is not to their satisfaction. The record of complaints must be made available to OFSTED/ISI on request. If we become aware that we are to be inspected by OFSTED/ISI we will notify parents and/or carers. After an inspection we will supply a copy of the report to parents and/or carers.

Contact details are:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD  
Tel number: 0300 123 1231  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us/how-complain>

**See over for Appendix**

## Appendix: Complaints Procedure

### 1. Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has supplied the following guidance:

Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views.

Governors asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

### 2. Convening Panel

Where the parent is not satisfied with the school's response to their complaint at stage two and indicates a wish to continue to stage three, for compliance purposes a panel hearing should take place even if the parent later indicated that they are now satisfied. The panel hearing should, in this case, proceed even if the parent subsequently decides not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

From January 2015, the written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the **formal** part of the procedure. In relation to these complaints only, schools are required to record whether they are then resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing. It is up to schools to determine whether or how they also wish to keep a record of informal complaints. Inspectors may advise that many proprietors wish to ensure records are kept, even of informal complaints, for management purposes to enable patterns of low-level concern to be monitored, though this is not a requirement.