

Including Sandlesford, our Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Authorised by	resolution of the Board of Governors
Date	Autumn 2010
Reviewed	Autumn 2014
	Autumn 2015
	Autumn 2016 (1-0-1)
	Spring 2019 (1-0-2)
	Autumn 2019 (1-0-3)

Introduction

This policy is for parents of current pupils and is available on the website. St Gabriel's will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year

St Gabriel's has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to "working days" we mean Monday to Friday, when school is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **on an informal basis**.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Form or Class Teacher, Head of School. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to have further consultation with the Leadership team, Vice-Principal or the Principal.
- Complaints made directly to a member of the Leadership team, Vice-Principal or the Principal, will usually be referred to the relevant Form or Class Teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

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- The Form Teacher or Head of School will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received, a copy of which will be held centrally. An acknowledgement of such a complaint in writing will be acknowledged by telephone, fax, email or letter within two working days of receipt during term time or within two working days of the first day of term or half term.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

Should the matter not be resolved within 15 working days, **the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2** of this Procedure.

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 Principal. After considering the complaint, the Principal, with the Vice-Principal and Head of School, will decide the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Principal will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally **within two working 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 Principal to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint; a copy of which will be held centrally.
- Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for his decision. The Principal's aim would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 28 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel and the aim would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 28 working days of the first day of term or half-term.
- If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for 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 their decision.
- **Early Years Foundation Stage:** parents will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- **If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

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

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- A Panel hearing is to make findings and recommendations around a decision taken by the Principal. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure but will conduct a full-merits hearing of the existing complaint.
- **The role of the Panel:** the Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
 - the documents provided by both parties and
 - any representations made by you, the Principal or the Chair
- If, after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.
- It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Principal or to the full body of Governors as appropriate.
- Parents should write to the Chair within five working days of receiving the Principal's decision to request a Panel Hearing, giving full contact details and enclosing all relevant documents. Your request will only be considered if you have completed States 1 and 2. Please state in your letter the outcome that you desire and all the grounds of your complaint. Please also send the Chair a list of the documents which you wish to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see. Your request will be acknowledged in writing within two working days.
- The Chair will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as reasonably practicable, but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three members who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel will be an independent person not involved with management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors, who will then schedule a hearing to take place normally **within ten working days** of the receipt of your request.
- 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 five working days prior to the hearing.
- The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel and will be conducted in an informal manner.
- **The parents 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 the parent does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, the School will continue to hold the hearing as detailed in this policy.
- 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. After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete **within seven working days of the Hearing.**

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- **The Panel will write to the parents by electronic mail or otherwise informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. (The decision of the Panel will be final.) The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Principal and Governors and sent in writing to the parents, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.**

Recording complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). 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 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.

Early Years Foundation Stage: The school will keep a written record of complaints and their outcome and will provide Ofsted and ISI 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. Parents of EYFS children can contact OFSTED using the details below if they believe that St Gabriel's is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Contacting Ofsted and/or ISI

The School is inspected by ISI, an independent organisation which reports to the Government on schools. Parents have the right to contact ISI if they have a complaint. Ofsted and/or ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to Ofsted at Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. General Helpline: 0300 123 1231; Textphone 0161 618 8524

Contact details for ISI

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

Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Number of complaints in the last school year - 1

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Date	Version	Changes
Spring 2019	1-0-2	Removal of reference to printed calendar
Autumn 2019	1-0-3	Panel hearing will still be held if the parent does not exercise their right to attend