

St Christopher's School

A Brighton College School



Complaints Policy

This policy applies to EYFS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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

This policy is available to parents of currently registered pupils. It is also available to parents of former pupils where the complaint was initially raised by them when the pupil was still registered. It does not extend to complaints about exclusions.

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally within 15 working days.
- If a parent ('the complainant') has a complaint they should contact the child's Form Tutor or the relevant Section Head in the first instance, who will seek to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. The Form Tutor/relevant Section Head may wish to consult a Head of Department, a member of the Bursary team, a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) or the Head. Complaints addressed directly to a Head of Department, a member of the Senior Management Team or the Head will be referred, where appropriate, to the relevant member of staff who will seek to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction.
- A member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) or the Head may be involved in order to assist in resolving the matter in the timescale provided. A record will be kept of any complaints handled by a member of SMT.
- If a resolution is not reached within fifteen working days, the complainant may determine to proceed with their complaint formally in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

It is expected that complaints will only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at Stage 1 and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage, thus allowing the complainant the potential for consideration at three different stages.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution with the Headmaster:

If the matter is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction under Stage 1, they may invoke the formal part of this Complaints Policy, by putting it in writing to the Head, who will decide the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the complainant concerned to discuss the matter within ten school working days of the Head receiving the complaint. It is hoped that a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- If the Head considers it necessary to carry out further investigations, he will notify the complainant that an investigation is being carried out which will take up to five working days, or longer if agreed by the complainant. He may appoint a senior member of staff who has had no prior involvement in the matter to carry out the investigation.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established in the course of the investigation, he will make a decision based on the report and the complainant will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for it. At the discretion of the Head, he may offer a meeting with the complainant to discuss the results of the investigation and the proposed decision.
- The Head and senior staff will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- If the Head feels that further investigation is warranted in order to reach a decision, he should inform the complainant and discuss with them a suitable time-frame within which to carry out this further investigation.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, the complainant can choose to request a Panel procedure, Stage 3 of the procedure.

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

If (following failure to reach a resolution under Stage 2) the complainant seeks to request a Panel hearing, they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors who calls hearings of the Complaints Panel. The complainant should send written notice of their complaint addressed to 'The Chairman of Governors, St Christopher's School, 33 New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 4AD'. When doing so the complainant should a) give reasonable particulars of their complaint sufficient to allow the panel to consider and resolve it, b) specify the outcome they feel is fair and c) provide a number of alternative times and dates on which they are available to attend a hearing.

- The Chairman of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within twenty-one school working days of receipt of the complaint, taking account the dates supplied by the complainant and the availability of panel members. Complainants are advised that scheduling panel hearings involves coordinating the diaries of many people and the Chairman of Governors may not be able to accommodate preferences on dates.
- The Panel will consist of 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 shall be appointed by the Governors, who will nominate one of the Panel members to chair 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 hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five school working days before the hearing.
- The complainant has the right to attend and be accompanied at a hearing if they wish. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, as the hearing is not a formal legal proceeding and it is more important that the members of the Panel hear directly from the complainants in their own words. Complainants should be aware that the statutory regulations under which this policy is made do not entitle parents to insist on legal representation.
- Whilst the Clerk, on behalf of the School, will make every effort to ensure that a complainant is able to attend the Panel hearing, complainants should be aware that Panel is obliged to hold the hearing regardless of their presence or absence, unless the complainants have previously indicated that they are satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
- The Complaints Panel will consider the matter and if the Panel feels it can resolve the complaint based on the evidence before it at the hearing, it will do so. The basis for the Panel's decisions will be on the balance of probabilities. Alternatively the Panel may consider that further investigation is needed.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and the timescale for such an investigation, up to a maximum of 20 school working days, or longer if agreed by the complainant. The Panel's hearing may be adjourned pending such investigation.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint before it, the Panel is authorised to review and reach findings in relation to all matters in dispute, including both the process by which decisions were reached at earlier stages and also the substance of those decisions. The Panel does not have the power to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents; require apologies to be given by individual members of staff; or make refunds of fees or compensatory awards.
- The Panel's decision will be communicated no later than five school working days after the conclusion of the Panel hearing (or adjourned hearing, where further investigations are undertaken). The Panel's decision is final and is not subject to any further appeal or review.
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; a copy of the recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head; a copy of the findings will be kept by the Head's Secretary.

Recording

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, including whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceeding to a Panel hearing. This record will also outline the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously. The complaint and any associated correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Children Act 1989 or the Childcare Act 2006 requests access to them or where required under the Data Protection Act 2018 or the General Data Protection Regulation.

The Head is responsible for the effective implementation of the Complaints Procedure and will review all formal complaints and their outcomes termly and report on these to the Governors, with a particular focus on any patterns or trends giving rise to concern.

Early Years Foundation Stage

For Early Years Foundation Stage pupils, any record of complaint will be kept for three years. Written complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be available to ISI on request. If you believe the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements you may contact Ofsted directly:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel. 0300123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Complaints 2019-20

During the academic year 2019-20 there were no complaints formally presented to the Headmaster.

Chairman of Governors

All current and prospective parents may contact the Chairman of Governors, Mr Adrian Underwood, in writing via the School Office. Letters should be marked 'Confidential' and will be passed on unopened.

Contacting ISI

The School is inspected by ISI, an independent organisation which reports to the Government on schools. Parents and pupils have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a pupil's welfare.

ISI will usually expect parents or pupils to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them.

However, you can report your concerns to ISI at: Independent Schools Inspectorate CAP House 9 - 12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA Telephone 020 7600 0100 Fax 020 7776 8849 info@isi.net

COVID-19 Appendix

Identified risk/policy area needing review/update as a result of Covid-19	Mitigating actions/change in policy required	
Potential for usual timescales to be disrupted	All timescales mentioned in this policy may need to be varied during the period of the Covid-19 global pandemic, in order to take account of disruption or the potential absence of key staff members. Every effort will be made to adhere to the timescales mentioned above and complainants will be kept informed if additional time is envisaged to be necessary	

Last reviewed: October 2020

Next review: October 2021

J.A.S. Withers

Headmaster