

*Charitable Objects of St. Catherine's School - The Objects for which the Company is established are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by providing, conducting, governing, carrying on and maintaining in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a boarding or day school or schools for girls in which the teaching shall be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.*



## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – Whole School**

**The Whole School refers to all staff and students in the St. Catherine's Preparatory and Senior Schools which includes: the Early Years/Foundation Stage (EYFS), Pre-Prep School (Key Stage 1), Prep. School (Key Stage 2); Middle School (Key Stage 3); Senior School (Key Stage 4) and the Sixth Form (Key Stage 5).**

This policy was reviewed in January 2019. It replaces that which was first published in 2004 and reviewed in 2009, 2010, 2012, and annually thereafter.

### **Introduction**

St Catherine's has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if pupils or parents do have a concern/complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure which is available to parents and prospective parents on the school's website and as a hard copy on request from the School.

As a School we have a genuine commitment to listening to feedback and regularly say that girls and parents should bring their concerns to us quickly so that all issues can be addressed in a timely manner, thus removing any anxieties. We use the word *concern* alongside *complaint* in the informal stages of this policy to indicate clearly that any issue, however apparently small, matters to that person and is taken as seriously as would be a complaint.

We are also required by legislation governing schools' complaints policies to state clearly here that *"Within boarding and in relation to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, No. 18, this policy is also for staff, boarders and parents. This policy also takes account of the particular needs, within the whole-school complaints procedure, for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)."*

*[Note: National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 is published by the Department for Education]*

In the following sections, the term 'Head' relates to either the Headmistress of the Preparatory School or the Headmistress of the Senior School as appropriate.

### **Pupils' Concerns/Complaints**

In the first instance pupils who have any concerns or complaints should talk to:

- In the Senior school – the subject teacher, form tutor or Housemistress
  - In the Prep school: FI-LIIL – the class teacher or tutor
  - In the Pre-Prep: EYFS, PPII, PPIII – the class teacher, teaching assistant or tutor
- If the resolution needed is more complex, issues may then be passed on to the Headmistress or one of her Senior Management Team.

- A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- Pupils and parents will always be kept informed, both of how the matter has been investigated and of the resolution.
- There should be an agreed resolution within 28 days (excluding weekends and school holidays).
- If parents wish to pursue their daughter's complaint directly with the School, the procedure for parents described below will apply.

## **Parents' Concerns /Complaints**

### **Stage 1 – Initial complaint/concern raised informally**

- It is hoped that most concerns/complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents/guardians have a concern/complaint they should contact their daughter's Form Teacher/Housemistress in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her to consult:
  1. In the Preparatory School: Deputy Head (Pre-Prep)/ Deputy Head (Curriculum)/ Deputy Head (Staff)/ the Head
  2. In the Senior School: a Head of Department/ Senior School Housemistress/ Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form/ Director of Studies/ Head of Boarding/ the Head
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Deputy Head/Director of Studies/Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher/Housemistress unless the Head of Department/Deputy Head of Curriculum/Deputy Head of Staff/Director of Studies/ Head of Boarding and Deputy Head of Pre-Prep/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- We will endeavour to acknowledge such letters, emails or telephone calls within 48 hours of their receipt (excluding weekends and school holidays) and to inform parents of how we intend to investigate the matter.
- A written record will be made of all concerns/complaints and the date on which they were received and stored in the girl's file.
- A letter or email will always be written to parents, or a telephone call made, to conclude a matter, indicating how the issue has been dealt with and the outcome reached.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days (excluding weekends and school holidays) or in the event that the Form Teacher/Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents/guardians are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint to the Head of Senior or Preparatory School**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents/guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Head formally. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet/speak to the parents/guardians concerned, within 7 days of receiving the complaint (excluding weekends and school holidays), to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations which may take longer. A timeframe would be agreed to enable this.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three years.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing within 28 days of receipt of the written complaint (excluding weekends and school holidays). The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents/guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Formal Complaint to Request a Panel Hearing**

- If parents/guardians seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should approach the Chief Operating Officer/ Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel to whom the matter will be referred for consideration. 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 will be appointed by the board of Governors. The Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 days (excluding weekends and school holidays).
- 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 2 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents/guardians 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.
- It is a mandatory requirement for the panel to consider the complaint, with or without the attendance of parents, unless the parents decide that they no longer wish to proceed.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/guardians' 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 all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and will make recommendations within 3 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings, if any, and recommendations, will be sent in writing or electronically to the parents/guardians, the relevant Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about within 28 days (excluding weekends and school holidays) of receipt of the written complaint reaching the Complaints Panel.
- Parents can be assured that all formal complaints at this level will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Secretary of State or a regulatory body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them and where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- Records of all formal complaints will be kept confidentially on file for 3 years indicating whether they have been resolved and at what stage.

*In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage regulations, the School will provide ISI and OFSTED, 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.*

Important Contact Details for more serious complaints should parents wish to raise them with the external regulatory body.

**The contact details for ISI are:**

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

Telephone 020 7600 0100  
Fax 020 7776 8849

e-mail address : [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

**The contact details for OFSTED are:**

OFSTED  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 1234 666

e-mail address : [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

The Contact details for The Department for Education (DfE) are:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)

Signed: .....  
Mrs A M Phillips  
Headmistress of Senior School

Signed: .....  
Miss N Bartholomew  
Headmistress of Preparatory School

Dated: .....

THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY.

Records of Formal Complaints (Stage 3) are recorded by the Clerk to the Governors in a bound book and are published on the School's website via this policy:

In the academic year 2017-18 we received 0 complaints at stage 3.