

Complaints Procedure for Parents

St Edmund's School is proud of the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. If a parent raises a concern or a complaint we want to resolve it as quickly as possible and it will be treated by the School in accordance with our Complaint Policy, which is published on the School portal. Our policy refers to either an informal resolution, (Stage 1) or a formal resolution (stage 2) of complaints/concerns; it should be noted that in nearly every case, (of the relatively few cases we receive) these are resolved at the informal stage.

For our purposes, we distinguish between a concern and a complaint. A concern is any query raised by a parent about the quality of our educational provision. A complaint is a specific and/or persistent dissatisfaction.

In accordance with paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, St. Edmund's School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint/Concern?

A complaint/concern 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/concern 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/concerns 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/concern that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints/Concerns

All complaints/concerns will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five 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/concern as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint/concern is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints/Concerns

Following resolution of a complaint/concern, the school will keep a written record of all complaints/concerns and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. (DfE Disposal of Records) 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 complaint/concerns will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, 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.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints/concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint/concern, they should contact their son/daughter's form teacher as soon as possible, but in any event within 28 days. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the head of the pre-prep or deputy headmaster as appropriate.
- Complaint/concerns made directly to the head of the pre-prep or deputy headmaster or headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints/concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within seven days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint/concern in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint/concern is against the Head, parents should make their complaint/concern directly to the Chairman of Governors.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution:

- If the complaint/concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then within 28 days the parents should put their complaint/concern in writing to the headmaster, who will decide, after considering the complaint/concern, the appropriate action to take.
- In most cases, the headmaster will speak to the parents concerned within seven days of receiving the complaint/concern, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint/concern.
- Once the headmaster is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The headmaster will give reasons for the decision.
- If the complaint/concern is against the headmaster, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the headmaster 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 his/her decision.

- The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of the headmaster receiving the complaint/concern. If for any reason this is not possible, the headmaster will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he/she is unable to issue his/her decision and informing the parents when he/she will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint/concern in any event.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed, within 28 days, 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 Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint/concern and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint/concern and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint/concern or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- 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.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint/concern 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 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 Chairman of governors and the headmaster. A copy of any findings by the Panel will be kept available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and headteacher.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints/concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- A record of any complaint registered with the school in respect of the EYFS will be kept for at least five years.
- The school will provide to OFSTED and/or ISI, upon request, a written record of all complaints received during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result.
- Parents who wish to make a complaint/concern about the school's EYFS provision may do so to OFSTED at Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA or by

phone on 08456 404040 and/or to ISI at CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA or by phone on 020 7776 8834.

Please note that parents may request the number of complaints registered in the preceding year.

The Chairman of Governors may be contacted in writing at the school address.

Reviewed: January 2018 – RMT

Date of next review: September 2018