



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (encompasses the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS))

Applies to:

- the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, along with all activities provided by the School, including those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching, support and supply staff), the proprietor and volunteers working in the School.

Legislation and Guidance

In drafting this policy, the School paid due regard to:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (ISSRs) in force at the time
- The Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage, July 2025
- The Independent Schools Standards Guidance for Independent Schools, April 2019
- ISI Inspection Handbook, September 2025
- ISI Inspection Framework, September 2025
- Equality Act 2010

Availability:

This procedure is made available on the School website and to parents of pupils on request to the School Office. Although the existence of the procedure is identified in the information provided for prospective pupils and parents, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils

Monitoring and Review:

The Headmistress logs all complaints received by the School and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.

The Proprietor monitors the Complaints Procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

A formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure is conducted by the Headmistress and the Proprietor, for the purposes of monitoring.

Reviewed by:



Michelle Jenkin (Headmistress)

Date: 1st February 2026



Kane Andrews (Proprietor)

Date: 1st February 2026

Related Documents:

- Discipline, Exclusions and Required Removal Policy;
- Safeguarding Policies; GDPR
- Record Retention and Deletion Policy.
- Privacy Notice

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1. INTRODUCTION

St John's Priory prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the School's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of pupils at the School do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

The term "parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following:

- a parent or guardian of a pupil at the school;
- parents or guardians of a pupil at the school; or
- several parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headmistress to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under the School's Discipline, Exclusions and Required Removal Policy and the School's Terms and Conditions. Such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

Notwithstanding the procedures detailed in this policy, at the completion of the whole complaints procedure (including panel hearing) parents have the right to address complaints to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Similarly, parents with children in EYFS can make a complaint to OFSTED and/or ISI in regards to the delivery of the EYFS curriculum. Contact details are provided at the end of this procedure. The School also has a Whistleblowing Policy available to staff.

The School aims to be fair, open and honest by giving careful consideration to all complaints, dealing with them as swiftly as possible. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable time-frame. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. We aim to resolve any complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Pupils will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We actively encourage strong home-school links and ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the School's response to concerns and complaints made by parents. We also ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint.

Where the person being complained about is named as the person who would be handling the complaint in these procedures, their role will be passed upwards to their line manager. For example, teacher to Headmistress or Headmistress to the Proprietor.

In the academic year 2024-2025 the School received 0 complaints.

2. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

2. 1. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Senior Leadership Team.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmistress will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless Headmistress deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.
- The School will endeavour to resolve the matter within five (5) working days.
- Should parents not be satisfied by the resolution in Stage 1 they may ask the Headmistress to move to Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Headmistress, parents should make their complaint directly to the Proprietor, whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

2. 2. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress. The Headmistress may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Headmistress may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headmistress (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmistress (or their nominee) will meet or speak with the parents concerned, within five (5) 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 further investigations to be carried out. The Headmistress (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.

- Written records will be kept of all formal meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmistress (or their nominee) 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 Headmistress (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Headmistress (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within ten (10) working days of the complaint reaching Stage 2 (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Headmistress, if so requested).
- If the complaint is against the Headmistress, the complaint should be made to the Proprietor. The Proprietor will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headmistress (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Proprietor to determine the complaint against the Headmistress.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

2. 3. Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), or due to the nature of the complaint, that they do not wish to follow Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure, they will be referred to the Convenor, who will be appointed by the Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. They should put their appeal in writing to the Convenor within five (5) days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- The Headmistress will continue to keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These records will include the stage at which it was resolved and details of actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it was upheld). 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten (10) working days.
- 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 (5) working days prior to the hearing.
- The claimant may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be

accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. In both cases, this may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to Convenor as soon as possible and by no later than two (2) working days before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five (5) working days of the Hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing).
- Any complaint about a decision taken by the Headmistress to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School's Discipline, Exclusions and Required Removal Policy and the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. There may be circumstances in which the School consider it necessary and appropriate to deviate from the Stage 3 procedure in the context of appeals for exclusion and required removal, and the School will inform the parents of this. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Stage 2 decision-taker to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmistress, that the decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Headmistress to have taken.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be:
 - o sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, the Headmistress, the Proprietor and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - o available for inspection on the School premises by the Proprietor and the Headmistress.
- The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints, are to be kept confidential except:

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting and inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails.

4. RECORDING COMPLAINTS AND USE OF PERSONAL DATA

St John's Priory School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

A written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its GDPR Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its GDPR Privacy Notice and its Record Retention and Deletion Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

5. SAFEGUARDING

If any complaint involves a potential safeguarding issue, this must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's Safeguarding.

6. REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. The School will notify the parents about the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days from the date the complaint was received.

St John's Priory will provide ISI/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. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its GDPR Privacy Notice and Record Retention and Deletion Policy.

Ofsted can be contacted at: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI can be contacted at: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
020 7600 0100
info@isi.net