



**St John's Priory School
Banbury, Oxon**

Complaints Procedure

This policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

References:

A. Independent School Standard Regulations Sept 2016 B. Boarding School

Background

St John's Priory School 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 with care and in accordance with this procedure. St John's Priory School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils as well as for any parent whose pupil has left but who started the complaints procedure prior to their child leaving. It is available on the school's website; www.stjohnspriory.co.uk and can also be requested from the school office in different formats if required.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Reference A, St John's Priory 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, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for the pupils and a pupil will not be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith.

The term 'Parents' includes a current or prospective parent, a legal guardian or educational guardian. It may, at the Headmistresses discretion, include a parent whose child has recently left the school.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints 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 as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint 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

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing. A record will also be made of any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are 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)
- Record of actions taken whether the complaint was upheld or not.

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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.

Signed:

Date: September 2019



Tracey Wilson
Headmistress

Giorgio Mystkowski
Governor/Proprietor

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint, they should contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as the child's teacher. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for the member of staff to consult the Deputy Head or Head of Pre-Prep.

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. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

If, however, the complaint is against the Headmistress, parents should make their complaint directly to the Proprietors who can be contacted via the School Business Manager.

Complaints of a financial nature concerning fees should be raised informally with the School Business Manager in the first instance and, should the matter not be resolved within 7 days, with the Proprietors.

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 Headmistress. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

In most cases, the Headmistress will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 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 Head to carry out further investigations, which should be concluded within a further ten working days.

Once the Headmistress 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 will also give reasons for her decision.

Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Headmistress, this should be put in writing to the Governor/Proprietors whose contact details are: Mr Karl Durham, karl.durham@dacholdings.co.uk, 07977 495264 or Mr Giorgio Mystkowski, gmystkowski@stjohnspriory.co.uk, 07726 619500 This should include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The proprietors, who are obliged to investigate the matter, will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the School Business Manager who has been appointed by the Proprietors to convene hearings of the Complaints Panel.

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 Governing Body. The School Business Manager, 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, 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 without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Panel chairman may direct that the hearing is tape recorded to assist accurate recollection purposes of the decision. The Panel will be under no obligation to retain tapes thereafter. A clerk will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings in any event.

The Panel chair will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or make take written statements into account.

All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Panel chair. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The decision of the Panel will be final. These findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about normally within 7 days of the hearing. They will also be provided to the Proprietors and the Headmistress.