



St Paul's School

Complaints Policy



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Policy Version	Version 4
Review Date	January 2025
Owner Name	Sarah Hyde
Owner Job Title	Interim Head Teacher

Version	Comments / Amendments	Name	Date
1	Implemented	David Cusack	Feb 2017
2	Reviewed	David Cusack	July 2019
3	Reviewed	David Cusack	Feb 2021
4	Reviewed	Sarah Hyde	Jan 2024
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Complaints Policy

This policy applies to both of the schools.

Introduction.

St Paul's school prides itself on being an open inclusive educational establishment that puts pupils at the heart of everything we do. We believe passionately in listening to pupils/parents/carers in all aspects of our work and are committed to ensuring we respond to all concerns raised in relation to our management and teaching at the school.

This policy aims to comply with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states;

- The policy should be in writing and easily accessible.
- Sets out a clear period to respond to complaints.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

- A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally (Stage 1), without the need to invoke formal procedures (Stages 2 & 3). We take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve any matter raised, as quickly as possible.

Who can make a complaint?

- Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions).
- The complaints procedure does not apply to prospective pupils who have no right of complaint.
- Complaints from Parents/Carers
- The procedures set out below only relate to complaints from parents of pupils, i.e., persons for whom education is being provided at the school. The process set out below does not cover complaints from parents of pupils who have left (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school).
- It is expected that complaints are made as soon as possible after an incident arises (although three months is generally considered to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint). The procedures below will be followed in the event of a complaint being made by parents or carers against the school (complaints are not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school).

Stages of Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1: Informal consideration of a Complaint.

Stage 2: Formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing.

Stage 3: A hearing of a complaint (if unresolved) by a panel (including representation from the schools Governing Body) not involved in the details of the complaint.

- Written records of all findings and recommendations of all formal complaints to be sent to complainants and held on file.
- At all stages, the school will advise the complainant of any action taken (regardless of whether they are upheld), as a result of the complaint.
- Please note parent/carer has the right to attend a panel hearing and to be accompanied by a person of their choice.

STAGE 1: Informal Complaint

- If a parent/carer has a concern or complaint about the school, they are advised in the first instance to speak to the staff member most closely concerned with the issue. This will be documented. The school must investigate and respond to the complaint within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.
- The staff member responding must keep a record of the discussion with the parent/carer, the actions taken to investigate the matter and the detail of the response to the complainant. This record should be passed to the school administrator and the line manager of the respondee for information.
- The respondent will advise the parent/carer that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome at this stage, they can submit a written complaint, as stated in the formal complaint process below.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaint.

- If following the informal stage the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can escalate the matter to the Head of School by completing a complaints form found via this link: [Complaints Form \(office.com\)](#)
- The Head of School will within five working days, speak to the complainant and either try to resolve the matter or if necessary carry out further investigations. Overall, the complaint must be responded to within fifteen working days of receipt of the formal complaint. All responses must be in writing and a copy sent to the school administrator to be held on file.

STAGE 3: Panel Hearing

- If after consideration of the formal response the complainant is still dissatisfied, they can ask Head of School for the matter to be referred for consideration by a panel, of a minimum of three individuals, not directly in the matter. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The Head of School will arrange a panel hearing within 14 working days of receipt of the request and notify the complainant of the date/time of hearing giving at least seven working days' notice.
- In preparation for the hearing the Head of School must prepare and circulate (to panel and complainant) a written summary of the complaint and actions taken to try to resolve the matter.

- At the panel hearing there will be an appointed Chair Person (one of the three panel members) who will ensure that all persons involved in the matter are given the opportunity to express their views and for the complainant why they are dissatisfied with the responses received previously and what they are seeking in terms of redress to the complaint.
- The school will be represented by the Head of School who will present why the school consider their response to be reasonable and answer any questions from the complainant or panel members.
- All proceedings will be recorded and available to all parties on request.
- Following conclusion of the hearing the panel will independently review all information and reach a judgement which will be communicated in writing to all parties within seven working days of the hearing.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response you have the right to refer the matter to the Local Authority or the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Complainants have one month to consider the response to the formal complaint (from date of letter of response).
- *All 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 109 of the 2008 Act, request them.*

Complaints from Pupils

The procedures below will be followed in the event of a pupil making a complaint against a member of staff, a fellow pupil or any other person or situation either in school or outside.

- Pupils may wish to talk to an adult they trust about a situation relating to school or to a situation outside school.
- Pupils are reminded that, although they may speak to any member of staff, there may be occasions where information will have to be referred to other agencies such as Children's Services.
- Within school, pupils may talk to any member of Education Staff.
- A pupil may merely need a trusted adult to talk a situation through with and may not be making a formal complaint. However, all actual complaints made by pupils will be recorded by the member of staff in the Complaints Log. The school response to the complaint will also be recorded. If the complaint is serious the pupil's parents/carers will be informed of both the complaint and the outcome. Some complaints will be referred to other agencies or to the Local Authority. If necessary, a meeting will be called to discuss the issues further.
- A pupil may ask to speak to an adult from an outside agency. The school will, wherever possible, put the pupil in contact with a representative of the appropriate agency. The referral will be noted in the pupil's file.
- if the complaint is an allegation against a member of staff, then the school's safeguarding policy must be followed in addition to recording the complaint. Failure to follow this process may result in disciplinary action.

Unreasonable Complainants

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high - quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated, and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:
 - Maliciously
 - Aggressively
 - using threats, intimidation, or violence
 - using abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language
 - knowing it to be false
 - using falsified information
 - publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head of School will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' evaluation. If the behaviour continues the Head of School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the school.

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