



## St John's Beaumont Preparatory School

### Complaints Policy

At St John's we pride ourselves on the quality of our teaching, the pastoral care provided to our pupils and our relationship with our parents.

From time to time, parents/guardians may experience anxiety or worry about processes or procedures at the School. The following policy outlines ways in which parents are welcome to raise these concerns in a manner that is designed to bring about a satisfactory resolution to these concerns.

Concerns may be raised regarding a real or perceived problem and made against the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. Any matter about which a parent/guardian is concerned and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this policy.

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

Parents/guardians wishing to raise a complaint will be treated in accordance with this procedure and can be assured that all complaints will be treated confidentially.

This procedure applies to parents of pupils currently on the roll of the School. It does not apply in respect of past pupils. This procedure does not apply to complaints by prospective parents.

Working days for the purposes of this procedure shall mean a day during term time other than a Saturday, Sunday, UK public holiday, or a day falling on a Guest Room during term time. Any complaints raised during School holidays (including Guest rooms) will be acknowledged and this procedure commence when the school re-opens. In calculating the number of days, the day of receipt of the complaint and the day of despatch of the response shall not be counted.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint (for example, the police, local authority safeguarding teams or any tribunal), this may impact on the School's ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in this procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigation.

#### Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly (within 10 working days) and informally. A parent making a complaint should contact one of the following in the first instance:

- a. Class Teacher or Tutor in respect of any academic, co-curricular and pastoral matter;
- b. Dormitory Master/Mistress in respect of boarding matters;
- c. The relevant Head of School or head of Year in respect of any year group matter;
- d. If a complaint is about a Head of Department, Head of School, or Head of Year, the parent should contact the Deputy Head;
- e. If a complaint is about a Dormitory Master/Mistress the parent should contact the Head of Boarding;

- f. If a complaint is about the Head Teacher, parents should raise this with the Head Teacher in the first instance.

The member of staff to whom the complaint is made will make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received and the outcome. The member of staff to whom the complaint has been made may consult with colleagues, meet with the pupil, parents or any other person involved in order to resolve the complaint and restore relations between those concerned. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If not, the parent will be made aware of this procedure and advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2. It should be noted that any complaints made by a parent to the Head Teacher, Deputy Head or any other member of staff will be, in the first instance, referred to the relevant Head of School, Head of Year or Head of Boarding to address or, if the complaint is about that person, to the Deputy Head.

### **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

1. If the complaint is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction by the informal process, then, unless the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the parents should put a formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher providing
  - a. details of the complaint
  - b. the reason they are not satisfied with the response
  - c. the outcome they are seeking

In most cases, the Head Teacher will appoint the Deputy Head or a member of SLT to conduct this part of the procedure on his/her behalf. References in this section to the "Head Teacher" include the Deputy Head or a member of SLT. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the procedure set out below should be followed.

2. The Head Teacher will respond to the parent concerned within five working days indicating how the School proposes to deal with the formal complaint. This will usually involve an investigation being undertaken as to the matters leading to the complaint. In appropriate circumstances, an alternative approach (for example, mediation) may be proposed.
3. Once the Head Teacher, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and any investigation is complete, a decision will be made as to the outcome of the complaint and the parents will be informed of this decision and the reasons behind it in writing , within 15 working days from the receipt of the complaint.
4. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, parents may submit their complaint to the Chairman of Governors by writing to the Clerk to the Governors. Within three working days of receipt, the Clerk will refer the complaint to the Chairman of Governors. Within five working days of such referral, the Chairman of Governors will nominate a Governor to consider the complaint and, via the Clerk, write to the parents with the name of the nominated Governor. The nominated Governor will ask for a report from the Head Teacher and will investigate matters (including, if appropriate, speaking to the parents concerned). Once the nominated Governor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and any investigation is complete, a decision will be made as to the outcome of the complaint and the parents will be informed of this decision and the reasons behind it in writing, within 15 working days from his/her nomination. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

1. If parents wish to invoke Stage 3, within ten working days' of the Head Teacher's decision they must submit a written complaint addressed to the Clerk to the Governors. Such complaint should give
  - a. reasonable particulars of the complaint
  - b. specify the outcome being sought
  - c. include any documents or other evidence or details of witness to fact or character on which the parents intend to rely
2. New matters of complaint will not be reviewed at this stage and any evidence unrelated to the initial complaint will not be considered. If new matters of complaint are raised at this stage, they will be acknowledged and the parents informed of the person to whom they have been referred under Stage 1.
3. The Clerk to the Governors will refer an appeal to the Appeal Panel for consideration within five working days of receipt of the complaint. The Appeal 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 Appeal Panel Members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors.
4. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Appeal Panel, will acknowledge the appeal and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days of the date of the complaint. The Clerk will notify the parents and the Head Teacher of the date of the appeal hearing and ask whether they plan to attend and speak at the hearing. If the parents elect not to attend a hearing, the School remains obliged to hold the hearing in line with the procedures outlined in this policy and the Appeal Panel will rely on written submissions to reach findings on the substance of the complaint. If the parents do wish to attend a hearing, the Appeal Panel will (i) determine whether the hearing will be held physically in person or virtually using Teams or similar software and (ii) make all reasonable efforts to facilitate parents exercising their right to attend the Appeal Panel hearing. However, if the parents cannot attend the scheduled date or any of three alternative dates proposed, the hearing shall proceed in their absence on the basis of written submissions only. If the parents cannot attend the scheduled date or the first alternative date proposed, the remaining two alternative dates may be after the expiry of the original 20 working day period but should be within 25 working days of the date of the complaint.
5. Both the parents and the Head Teacher may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish provided that they provide the details of such person and a statement of the capacity in which they are attending to the Appeal Panel in advance. In either case, this person (i) may be a relative, teacher or friend. (ii) must undertake to accept the confidentiality of the appeal and (iii) shall not have the right to address the Appeal Panel unless expressly invited to do so by the Appeal Panel. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
6. The hearing will not be conducted in an adversarial way and the primary concern of the Appeal Panel is to deal with matters fairly and, therefore, the chairman of the Appeal Panel has discretion to conduct the hearing (including deciding who may attend) in any way which will achieve this. Subject to the rules set out in this document, the Appeal Panel may regulate their proceedings and give such directions as they see fit.

7. If the Appeal Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter and any relevant documents or records be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
8. If the Chair of the Appeal Panel reasonably believes that the Appeal Panel should hear evidence from an individual in private (i.e. in the absence of the person bringing the complaint or any third party), he or she may so decide. In such circumstances, the complainant will be given reasons for the decision and a summary of the individual's relevant evidence after the event if the Chairman of the Appeal Panel believes the evidence to be relevant to the complaint. The Appeal Panel may withhold the identity of a pupil who gives evidence in private to the Appeal Panel.
9. If possible, the Appeal Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Appeal Panel will decide how it should be carried out. This process shall be completed within 10 working days of the hearing.
10. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Appeal Panel will reach a decision whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part and may make recommendations. The Appeal Panel may make a decision by majority vote.
11. The Appeal Panel will write to parents, the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors and, if relevant, the person(s) being complained about informing them of the outcome of the complaint, the reasons for this and of any recommendations within fifteen working days of the hearing or, if further investigation was required, within ten working days of the date such investigation was concluded. Whilst the Appeal Panel may make recommendations to the School, the Appeal Panel cannot make any financial award nor impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents
12. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final and represents the conclusion of this procedure.
13. The Appeal Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the School's premises by Governors and the Head Teacher.

### **Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)**

The School is inspected by ISI. Parents have the right to contact the ISI if they have a complaint regarding the School's general education, pastoral or boarding provision. ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ISI on 020 7600 0100 or you can write to the ISI at CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

### **Managing Serial and Persistent Complaints**

The School will do its utmost to be helpful to people who make contact with a complaint, concern or request for information. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints' procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant attempts to re-open the same issue, the school will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts the School again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the School may choose not to respond. However, this will not occur until the complainant has completed the three stages of the complaints' procedure. The application of a 'serial or

persistent' designation for a complaint will be against the subject of the complaint rather than the complainant themselves.

### **Documentation, Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

1. A copy of this procedure as well as the number of complaints dealt with by the School under the formal procedures can be found on the School's website.
2. The School will ensure that parents who request a copy of this procedure are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.
3. Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, although the Appeal Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection (see above). 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 s109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them or under other legal authority.
4. The School maintains a record of all formal parent complaints for at least three years for regular review by senior management and for inspection by inspectors. The records states whether the complaint was resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing and will state the action taken as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld). Such records will be retained in accordance with the School's Retention Guidelines. The School will provide ISI on request with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action taken as a result of each complaint.
5. The number of formal complaints received during the previous academic year can be obtained from the Bursar [bursar@sib.email](mailto:bursar@sib.email).

### **EYFS**

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated according to the above procedure and the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 day. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

OFSTED and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate may be contacted at any stage for assistance or advice. Their purpose is to monitor the educational and social well-being of school children. OFSTED can be contacted by email on [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk), by telephone on **03001231231** or by letter at: **Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M2 7LA**. ISI can be contacted by telephone on 020 7600 0100.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Board of Governors will monitor the number and type of complaints received and the operation of the procedures set out in this policy. They will also review the policy at annually to ensure it meets statutory requirements and continues to reflect best practice.

<b>Policy Owner:</b> Mr Giles Delaney & Mrs Paola Bright	<b>Circulation:</b> Website	<b>Review Date:</b> November 2021	<b>Approved by</b> <b>SLT &amp; GC</b>	<b>Date of next review:</b> December 2022
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