



# St Andrew's

BERKSHIRE

## Complaints Procedure

### Introduction

St Andrew's School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching, boarding and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. St Andrew's makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website. The school has the following procedure, which is for parents of all pupils, including all those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also those who are flexi-boarding at the school. Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. 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.

### 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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that their child will not be penalised for a complaint that has been raised in good faith, and that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

### The Three-Stage 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, in the first instance, contact their son/daughter's form teacher or, for boarding matters, the Head of Boarding. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with the Head of Juniors/Middles/Seniors, or one of the Deputy Heads/Head of Pre-Prep, so that the appropriate member of staff is handling the complaint.
- 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 ten working 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, outlined below.
- If the complaint is against the Head Master, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the St Andrew's Committee whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

### **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 Head Master. The Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head Master (or their nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within ten 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 Head (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 meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Master (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 Head Master (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head Master will make their decision and provide parents with reasons normally within 15 working school days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head Master, the complaint should be made to the Chair of the St Andrew's Committee. The Chair of the St Andrew's Committee will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head Master (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of the St Andrew's Committee to determine the complaint against the Head.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of the St Andrew's Committee, within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Letters should be addressed to the Chair of the St Andrew's Committee, Mr Philip Waite, c/o, St Andrew's School. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Chair of the St

Andrew's Committee in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

- The clerk to the Panel, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three members who were not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, one of which is independent of the management and the running of the School. The panel will appoint one of themselves to be the chair of the panel throughout the proceedings. There will also be an independent note taker present for hearing. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint, usually within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days from the composition of the panel being finalised.
- 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 5 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The panel will decide if it will be helpful if witnesses attend.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
  - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
  - make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head Master, the Committee and, where relevant, the person complained of. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Committee and the Head Master.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

## Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing, 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 Privacy Notices that can be found on the School's [website](#). 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 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 complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

## 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. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

**St Andrew's has received one formal complaint in the academic year of 2023/24.**

## Document Review History

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