



ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL  
TWICKENHAM

## ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Senior and Prep)

### SCHOOL MISSION

We are inspired by St Catherine of Siena, who said 'Be who God wants you to be, and you will set the world on fire', to form young women of confidence and compassion, ready for service and leadership in the world. We fulfil our mission through these values:

**Community:** a place of cheerfulness, dignity and tolerance, where all are welcome

**Faith:** a Christ-centred school with time for reflection; a culture of gratitude and friendship

**Courage:** with self-knowledge, resilience and integrity, and a readiness for challenge

**Scholarship:** where gifts are developed through curiosity, imagination and ambition

**Service:** commitment to others, to stewardship, and to justice and hope for all

### 1. Introduction

Parents at St Catherine's are very much part of the school community and their support is warmly welcomed. The School is proud of the way that parents and the School come together to resolve any concern, difficulty or complaint.

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching, co-curricular provision and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents or guardians have concerns about any aspect of their daughter's life at school, they are asked to contact an appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. The School will respond to all complaints according to this procedure and will follow up courteously and promptly.

During their termly visits, Safeguarding Governors review the Complaints Register.

### 2. General guidance

- a) The School aims to resolve any complaints in a timely manner, and timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. The term 'working days' means Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

- b) Two things tend to make parents and pupils reluctant to make a complaint: a concern that the School will not see the issue as important; and a concern that a complaint may lead to repercussions for the pupil. However, the School will take all complaints seriously, and under no circumstances will the School discriminate against a pupil because of complaints made.
- c) If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- d) A complaint must be raised within three months of the incident (in the absence of mitigating reasons) or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.
- e) The procedure does not apply in respect of past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised while the pupil was still on the School roll.
- f) Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.
- g) Parents should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis; parents are required to use the procedure outlined in this policy.
- h) If the complaint is about the Headmistress, the parent should direct the complaint to the Clerk to the Governors who will direct it to the Chair. The Chair of Governors will hear the complaint or appoint another Governor to do so. If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3.

### **3. Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

- If a parent has a complaint relating to a day-to-day issue, the right person is likely to be the relevant Teacher or Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway, by this means, to the parent's satisfaction. If the Teacher/Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, Pastoral Head or a relevant member of the Senior Management Team.
- For more serious general academic or curriculum concerns parents are advised to contact the Deputy Head Academic, Head of Sixth Form, or Head of Prep.
- For pastoral or disciplinary concerns parents are advised to contact the relevant Pastoral Head, Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head Pastoral, Head of Sixth Form, or Head of Prep.
- For matters regarding finance, fees and non-academic services parents are advised to contact the Bursar.
- A letter or email will be written to parents to indicate how the issue has been investigated and to explain the outcome.

- A written record will be kept of all complaints, including the date on which they were received and the details and outcome of the subsequent investigation.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint then the parent(s) will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 2: Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint has not been resolved by the Stage 1 process, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress ([headmistress@stcatherineschool.co.uk](mailto:headmistress@stcatherineschool.co.uk)). The Headmistress will aim to acknowledge the complaint within two working days.
- The Headmistress will decide on the appropriate course of action to take after considering the complaint,
- In most cases, the Headmistress will contact the parents concerned, normally within five school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter unless, despite the best efforts of all involved, circumstances dictate that this step be delayed. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The Headmistress (or her delegated representative) may carry out further investigations.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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.
- The Headmistress's aim is to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 25 working days from the receipt of the complaint.
- Any complaint received within two weeks of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to school holidays and the unavailability of relevant personnel.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

If, having discussed the matter with the Headmistress, and having received the Stage 2 decision, parents feel dissatisfied, then they are advised to contact the Chair of Governors within five working days.

Parents can write to the Chair in confidence c/o the Bursar, who is Clerk to the Governors. This letter to the Chair should give full details of the complaint and enclose all relevant documents and full contact details. The letter will normally be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within four working days during term time, and as soon as practicable in the holidays, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

The Chair will convene a Complaints Panel consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person independent of the day-to-day management and running of the school, to consider the complaint. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. On behalf of the Panel the

Chair of Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 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 two school 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 normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will come to a decision on the parent's complaint without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be obtained and how this should be made available to the Panel and the complainant. After due consideration of all matters considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten school days of the conclusion of the hearing and such further investigations as the Panel considers necessary.
- The Panel will write to the parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmistress, the Governors and, where relevant, to the person about whom a complaint has been made.

#### **4. Compliance**

A written record of all complaints will be kept for seven years, and also a record of whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing, unless there are safeguarding implications in which case they will be retained for longer, in line with regulations. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential by the School except where disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection or under other legal authority.

In accordance with Part 7 of the Independent Schools Standards Regulations (2021), St Catherine's will make this Complaints Procedure available to parents; it is on the school website and a copy can also be requested via the school reception.

The number of formal complaints registered at the School during the preceding school year will be available to parents on request.

#### **5. Complaints**

Parents can make a complaint directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they wish to do so. Contact details for ISI: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA; telephone 0207600 0100 or email [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

Formal complaints received in 2022-2023: 0

**Reviewed: October 2024**

**Next Review Date: October 2025**