

St George's School Windsor Castle Complaints Procedure



Introduction

St George's School Windsor Castle (the "School") celebrates the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be dealt with swiftly by the School in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students without unreasonable delay. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that neither you nor your child will be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

"Parent(s)" or "you" mean the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current registered student about whom the complaint relates.

This policy is a whole school policy and covers the Kindergarten setting, Pre-Prep (Reception – Year 3) and Prep School (Years 4-8).

The Complaints Procedure is available on the school website, staff handbook and upon request from the school office. Although this Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of prospective students, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current students.

Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the student to which the complaint relates was still registered as a student at the school. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a student under Paragraph 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than 5 working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a student.

The School will not normally respond to or investigate any complaint which is anonymous or complaints sent as part of a Complaints Campaign¹. The Head, in conjunction with the Chair of Governors, will determine whether the complaints warrant an investigation.

In accordance with paragraph 32 (1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What is 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 faculty or department, or about

¹ This would include, for example, a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject from complainants unconnected with the school.

an individual member of staff. Any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this Complaints Procedure.

Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timeframes.

To assist the School in responding to complaints as quickly as possible, parents are expected to proceed with their complaints in a timely and reasonable manner. As such, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the School as soon as possible, usually within 3 months of an issue arising. We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there are valid reasons for not making a complaint within the timeframe and where the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

Please note that for purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and INSET days. 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 any undue delay.

Timescales for investigating and / or responding to a complaint may need to be extended in the event of a force majeure, a pandemic or as the result of enforced government restrictions. The School will inform you in writing if there is to be a delay to the anticipated timescales, for instance because of disruption to the School, staff absence or site closure.

Written records of all complaints and the action taken as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld), whether they are resolved at the formal (stage 2) stage or proceed to a panel hearing, will be kept as required by regulation, in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice, and in most cases for a period of at least 7 years, after which the records will be destroyed, with a deletion record taken. Any complaints relating to safeguarding or child protection will be kept indefinitely. **All written complaints must be signed by the person making the complaint and all verbal complaints must be verified by name so that communication can be maintained between the school and the complainant. The school will not respond to or investigate any complaint which is anonymous or made on behalf of a third party.**

Complaints Procedure

The School has a three stage Complaints procedure, as set out below.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- The School's structure of communication for parents is set out below. In the first instance for the vast majority of issues, parents should first contact their child's Class Teacher/Form Tutor. Accordingly, complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or Pedagogical Leadership Team (PLT) will usually be referred to the relevant Class / Form tutor, unless it is deemed appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

- The relevant member of staff will respond to parents within 2 working days of receiving the initial complaint. A written record will be made of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Records are kept electronically and are reviewed at least annually to inform best practice.
- Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily, then the matter will be escalated to a member of the PLT or SLT. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the lines of communication are as follows:

Area of responsibility	Member of staff to contact
Kindergarten and Reception	Head of Pre-Prep
Years 1-3	Head of Pre-Prep
Years 4-6	Head of Prep School
Years 7-8	Head of Senior Prep
Boarding	Houseparents
Years 4-6 Pastoral matters	Years 4-6 Pastoral Lead
Safeguarding and Child Protection issues	Head of Safeguarding
Sport, Co-Curricular and PE	Director of Sport and Co-Curricular
Music and Performing Arts	Director of Music
Catering, facilities, grounds, health & safety, fire procedures, critical incident, support staff	Business Director

- In some circumstances, it might be appropriate to pass an issue to a Faculty Lead, and a more serious issue may be referred by the Form Tutor / Class Teacher to the Head of Pre-Prep, Head of Prep School, Head of Senior Prep or Head of Safeguarding.
- If the matter still remains unresolved within 10 working days of the School receiving the initial complaint from the parents, parents may be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

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. The Head or nominated colleague will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint:
 - within 2 working days of receipt during term time
 - within 7 working days of receipt out of term time
- The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The Head will either review the complaint themselves or allocate an appropriate member of staff to do so instead.
- In some cases, the Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 10 working days of receiving the stage 2 complaint, to discuss the matter. So an accurate record of the conversations can be kept, the meeting will be minuted, ordinarily by the Head's PA. If appropriate, another member of the SLT might attend meetings. Wherever possible, it is hoped that a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- Parents will be complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 14 working days of the Head having received the complaint, unless further investigation is required.

- It may be necessary for the Head, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations. If this is the case, parents will be informed.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for their decision. Wherever reasonably practicable, the Head or nominated colleague will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of receipt of the stage 2 complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Head, Parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days of receiving it, and will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to, or meet with the Parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of the decision in writing, and the reasons for the decision. This decision will be provided with 14 days of receiving the complaint, unless further investigation is required.
- Wherever possible, it is hoped that a resolution will be reached at stage 2. However, if parents are not satisfied with the decision, they have the right to proceed to stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure, noting the timeframe below.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- Parents have the right to appeal against the outcome of a stage 2 formal complaint. This should normally be done within 7 working days of receiving the stage 2 response. An appeal request should be addressed in writing (letter or email) to the Chair of Governors, setting out the reasons for the continued dissatisfaction, the desired outcome, and requesting a hearing by a Complaints Panel (“the Panel”). Parents should also ensure that a copy of all relevant documents accompanies the appeal request wherever possible.
- Upon receipt of the appeal request, the Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) will ask the Clerk to the Governors to convene a Panel to hear the appeal. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed on the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and leadership of the School. The Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel.
- The Chair of the Panel will acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a Panel Hearing to take place as soon as possible and practicable, other than exceptionally such period not exceeding 20 working days from the receipt of the stage 3 complaint. If the parent is unable to attend on the proposed date, the Clerk to the Governors will offer an alternative, but this may result in a delay to the timeframe. There may be reasons, such as due to restrictions associated with a pandemic, where it may be appropriate for the Panel Hearing to take place remotely.
- 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 Panel Hearing. Wherever reasonably possible, copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 working days prior to the Panel Hearing. These may need to be redacted for

data protection reasons, for instance where there is third party data, and there may be instances, such as where there are safeguarding concerns, where documents may be shared confidentially with the Panel only.

- The parent(s) 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. The parents should notify the school at least 3 working days in advance of the Panel Hearing of the name and occupation of an accompanying person (if relevant). If the Head, or a nominee of the School, attends the panel hearing, they shall also be entitled to be accompanied by one other person.
- The Panel Hearing is not a court case, it will be held in private, and will be as informal as the circumstances allow. The panel is a non-legal forum: panel members are not legally trained and therefore cannot make findings as to points of law.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the panel.
- Unless the chair of the panel has received a written request in advance of the hearing for it to be recorded, and has provided their express written permission to do so, any recording of the hearing is prohibited.
- The Panel may ask for a note taker (e.g. a member of the school's administrative team) to be present during the hearing to take notes of the proceedings. Any such notes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript, and are simply for the benefit of the Panel, so that they can focus on listening to the parents' concerns. All present at the Panel Hearing will also be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes.
- The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly.
- The Panel Hearing will proceed irrespective of whether or not the parents and / or their companion attend. If parents fail to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the Complaints Panel will still proceed in their absence and the process will continue to its conclusion. Any further attempt to re-open the matter may be considered as falling under the "Serial, vexatious, unreasonable or persistent complaints" section as set out below.
- Wherever possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how the further investigation should be carried out.
- After due consideration of the merits of the complaint, and all facts the Panel considers relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether to dismiss the complaint in whole or part; whether to uphold the complaint in whole or part; and / or whether to make any recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 15 working days of the Panel Hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the Panel Hearing). A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head. A copy of the

Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School's premises by the Governors (who are the proprietor) and the Head.

Recording complaints and the use of personal data

- All written complaints must be signed by the person making the complaint and all verbal complaints must be verified by name so that communication can be maintained between the School and the complainant.
- Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceeded to a Panel Hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). They will also identify if the complaint relates to boarding provision.
- The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel meetings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, but in most cases for a period of at least 7 years from the conclusion of the complaint, after which the records will be destroyed, with a deletion record taken.
- All complaints relating to safeguarding or child protection will be kept in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice and statutory or regulatory obligations.
- The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel Hearing member appointed under 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 student;
 - Description of the issue;
 - Records of the investigations (if appropriate);
 - Witness statements (if appropriate);
 - Name and contact details of member(s) of staff / governors handling the issue at each stage;
 - Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations);
 - Notes and minutes of a hearing; and
 - The panel's written decision.
- This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice) potentially including information relating to physical or mental health where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.
- Details of the number of formal complaints received by the school from the preceding school year are available from the School Office.
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept strictly confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or some other legal authority, requests access to them.

Serial, vexatious, unreasonable or persistent complaints

- The decision of the Panel at Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure is final. If at any level parents attempt to reopen an issue or closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this Complaints Procedure, the Head or Chair of Governors may write to the parent to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or closely related issue. If the parents write again on the same issue, there will be no obligation on the part of the School to respond.
- The School will not normally limit the contact parents 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. In some cases, we may decide to treat a complaint as vexatious, such as where complaints are repetitious such that they are prolific to the point of harassment.
- Where the School does decide to treat a complaint as vexatious, the School will write to tell the parents why it believes the complaint falls in that category, what action the School is taking and the duration of that action.
- Wherever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the parents informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking.
- If the behaviour continues, the Head or Chair of Governors will write to the parents explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For parents who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts. This will be regularly reviewed.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the School will inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School site.

Suspension and exclusion appeals

Any complaint of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Head to reconsider his decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken

Complainants right to appeal

ISI (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. ISI can be contacted by telephone on 020 7600 0100 or in writing to Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

Complaints relating to the fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation (EYFS) Statutory Framework Requirements

- Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure.
- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, and the outcome will be notified to the parent within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. Stage 3 above will be available to parents if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.
- The School will provide ISI / Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.
- The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice.
- Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements:
 - Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
 - ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net. ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Complaints raised by Boarders

Standard 14.2 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (2022) states that: *The school should also have a clear and easily accessible process for boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision. The school's procedures should be clear about how it will respond to complaints from boarders. Boarders are not penalised for raising a complaint in good faith.*

Boarders may raise a complaint about boarding provision at St George's informally with the House Parents, or by writing to the Senior Deputy Head or Head of Senior Prep. The Senior Deputy Head or Head of Senior Prep will arrange to meet with the boarder(s) within 48 hours to discuss the complaint. The discussion will be minuted by the Senior Deputy Head or Head of Senior Prep, and minutes agreed with the boarder(s). The Senior Deputy Head or Head of Senior Prep will outline a response and appropriate timescale for resolution and a follow-up meeting. All complaints raised by boarders will be recorded.

If the boarder(s) feels the complaint is unresolved, then the boarder(s) will be invited to contact the Head, who will follow up the matter within 24 hours of being contacted.

Contact Details

St George's School Windsor Castle

01753 836 502; schooloffice@stgwindsor.org

The Chair of Governors
governors@stgwindsor.org

Reviewed: May 2024 (last ratified by the School Council, March 2024)

Next review: March 2025 Head

Appendix

Number of complaints received

The number of Level 3 complaints as defined in this policy in the preceding school year are shown below as required under the Independent Schools Standard Regulations.

Academic Year	Number of Level 3 complaints
2018/19	0
2019 / 20	0
2020 / 2021	0
2021/2022	0
2022/2023	0

Complaints received in relation to fees as a result of COVID-19

This does not include complaints received in relation to the payment of fees as a result of COVID-19. As this doesn't fall within the complaints policy, any matters relating to fees are dealt with by the Business Director, Head, and the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Contact Details

Head: Mr. William Goldsmith
Telephone Number: 01753 836 502
Email headmaster@stgwindsor.org

Chairman of Governors: Mr. Ian Canning
Email ChairofGovernors@stgwindsor.org

These contact details are secure both in term time and during school holidays.

In the case of wishing to complain to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, who conduct regular inspections of the school, the contact details are as follows:

The Independent Schools Inspectorate
Telephone Number: 0207 600 0100
Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Telephone number: 0207 210 4850