

<i>Review Initiated by</i>	<i>Headteacher</i>
<i>Last Review</i>	<i>Autumn 2024</i>
<i>Next Review</i>	<i>Autumn 2025</i>

## SAINT CHRISTINA'S SCHOOL: COMPLAINTS POLICY

*This Policy can be found in the Policy Library and on the School's Website*

### Equal Opportunities

At Saint Christina's School we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the School, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy / maternity or marriage / civil partnership. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected with the School feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in School life.

This procedure applies to parents of pupils who are currently within Saint Christina's School and to past pupils where a complaint was initially raised when a pupil was a member of the School.

Clearly the School hopes that issues arising will be few and far between, but is realistic and knows that there will be occasions where problems need to be resolved. Of the issues that the School is asked to address in the course of a year, most if not all, are resolved at an informal level. Where at all possible parents should seek to resolve matters at an informal level. This is usually best done by discussion and agreement.

This policy applies to Saint Christina's School and includes the EYFS setting.

- 1. Definition of a Complaint:** A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School and in the scope of this policy and procedure.
  - 1.1 In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will make available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- 2. Initial Expressions of Complaint (Stage 1 - Informal)**
  - 2.1. If a parent has a concern about an aspect of their child's life at school, they should, in the first instance, contact the Class Teacher (or, if the matter is a particularly sensitive one, a senior member of staff), who will try to assist or will refer the matter to another member of staff, as necessary. Where this course is not deemed sufficient, or where it has been tried but the outcome is considered unsatisfactory, the parent may refer the matter to the Headteacher.

- 2.2. Parents can be assured that any complaint will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school wants your child's time here to be happy, safe and successful. No child will be penalised for any complaint raised in good faith.
- 2.3. Parents should expect that the matter be resolved within 3-5 term-time working days.
- 2.4. Where all reasonable attempts to resolve a complaint at an informal level have failed, or where, in exceptional circumstances, an apparently extreme situation would appear to justify a formal complaint immediately, the following procedure should be used.

### **3. Formal Complaint (Stage 2)**

- 3.1. A parent wishing to make a formal complaint should have already followed the procedure detailed above regarding informal approaches.
- 3.2. Parents wishing to make a formal complaint should submit the complaint and the grounds for it, to the Headteacher in writing, stating clearly why they wish the matter to be dealt with by formal procedure. The School will acknowledge a formal complaint in writing within 2-3 term-time working days.
- 3.3. In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within six days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 3.4. As warranted by the nature of the complaint, there may be need to investigate the matter further. Any investigation would be overseen by an appropriate, senior member of staff or the Headteacher. In some situations it may be appropriate, as a small School, to ask a member of the Governing body or an external investigator to assist at this stage. Any Governor used in this capacity would be barred from further involvement in the matter if it proceeds to a Stage 3 Appeal. All parties would be expected to co-operate with an investigation and could expect to be required to give the necessary amount of time (which may be substantial) to assist these investigations.
- 3.5. Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision. Complainants will normally be notified of the outcome of any investigation within 15 working days of the school receiving a complaint.
- 3.6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. The school may decide to proceed to Stage 3 unilaterally.
- 3.7. A parent wishing to make a formal complaint about the Headteacher should follow the above procedure, but submit the written complaint to the **Mrs Joan McConnell, Chair of Governors, Saint Christina's School, 25, St Edmund's Terrace, St John's Wood, London NW8 7PY** without informing the Headteacher. The Chair would be responsible for ensuring that any such the matter would be dealt with in accordance with the procedure above, but by a person or people appropriate to the situation.

- 3.8. Please note that parents can only raise a stage 2 complaint within three months of the issue being raised.

#### **4. Appeal Panel (Stage 3)**

- 4.1. If a parent is dissatisfied with the conclusion of the Formal Complaint as dealt with in Section 3 of this Policy, they may request a panel hearing which will happen within 15 days
- 4.2. Parents wishing to make an appeal should make their submission in writing, with a clear statement as to the grounds on which the appeal is being requested. This should be raised within 5 days and addressed to the Clerk to the Governors (Mrs J Reilly) in an envelope marked 'Chair of Governors'. The request must be made within 20 working days from the date of the stage 2 decision letter, stating the outcome they desire and all the grounds of the complaint. The request will only be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2 have been completed.
- 4.3. An appeal panel would be convened within 20 days of receipt of the written appeal and comprise of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matters that were subject to complaint, one of these individuals being independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the panel members would be appointed by a designated Governor.
- 4.4. The Panel may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- 4.5. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 4.6. The panel will proceed without the parent(s) present if necessary to bring the matter to a conclusion.
- 4.7. The panel will not meet if the parent(s) indicate they are now satisfied and they do not want to proceed further.
- 4.8. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 4.9. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- 4.10. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- 4.11. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Headteacher.

## Notes:

**Early Years Foundation Stage:** Additional requirements apply for EYFS settings beyond those which apply to the rest of the school. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. This will be done in accordance with the procedures outlined within this policy. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

If parents of children within the EYFS setting believe that the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements, they can contact Ofsted via their helpline on 0300 123 1231. If the School is to be inspected, all parents will be notified of the fact. All parents will, following the inspection, be supplied with a copy of the report.

**Flexibility:** Whilst neither parents nor the School are obliged to follow the procedure in every instance and whilst there may be occasions when parents or the School consider it appropriate to change or omit parts of the procedure, any flexibility in respect of this procedure on the part of the School does not include deviation from its statutory responsibilities with regard to written complaints within the EYFS setting. The School may amend this procedure from time to time.

**Record Keeping:** The School maintains a written record of all complaints where Stage 2 of this procedure, requiring formal resolution, has been invoked and of (i) whether they were resolved at that stage or proceeded to a panel hearing, and (ii) the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld). The record will be kept for at least seven years. Records include:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Records where a panel has made findings or recommendations,
- Records decisions taken and outcomes
- 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

**Non-prejudice and vexatious or time-wasting complaints:** No person will be penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint when this is done in good faith, and the School will

follow a fair and effective procedure in the event of a complaint being made. However, vexatious or time-wasting complaints are serious matters and may result in serious action being taken by the School. Such serious action may include legal action and/or ending the School's contract with the vexatious or time-wasting parent (resulting in the child having to leave the School).

**Proper consideration and confidentiality:** Any concern or complaint (whether formal or informal) will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record will be kept, with dates and with notes of the level at which resolution was reached, of any complaint and of any meetings, interviews, statements, correspondence, decisions or actions arising in relation to a complaint as noted above, for a period of at least seven years.

These will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by Regulation / Law and will remain available for inspection in school by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

In the last 12 months (School Academic Year 2023-24) the School has dealt with 1 formal complaint.