



ST BEES SCHOOL

WHERE WEST MEETS EAST

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

2021 - 2022

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Review by: Assistant Head

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INTRODUCTION

St Bees School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. St Bees School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of students on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and St Bees School will ensure that parents of students who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents – 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 Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of a student under Section 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions of Contract in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a student.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, St Bees School will make available to parents of students and of prospective students and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the School's Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current student about whom the complaint relates.

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 all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.



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THE THREE-STAGE COMPLAINTS 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 normally contact their son/daughter's Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If they cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult the appropriate, more senior line manager.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/the Assistant Head/the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor unless they deem it appropriate for to deal with the matter personally.
- The complaint responder 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 5 working days or in the event that the responder 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 Complaints Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the Board 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 Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will communicate with the parents concerned, within 5 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 the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Board will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair 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 the Board is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of the Board will give reasons for his/her decision.



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- 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 a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Complaints Panel Chair who has been appointed by the Board to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Complaints Panel Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- 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.
- 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 without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and may 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 (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. 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 the Board and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of the Board and the Headmaster.
- Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of the student under Section 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmaster, that the Headmaster's decision to exclude / require the removal of the student was not a reasonable decision for the Headmaster to have taken.



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TIMEFRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

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

PERSISTENT CORRESPONDENCE

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS AND USE OF PERSONAL DATA

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 Notice. 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 student
- 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)
- Notes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.



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The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice but in most cases for a period of at least 6 years after the student leaves the School.

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.

For the academic year 2020-21 the School received 0 formal complaints.

