



ST HELEN'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

St Helen's has long prided itself on the high quality of teaching 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.

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 daughter's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult the Deputy Head of Section, Deputy Head or Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Head of Section unless the Head deems it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor 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 fourteen days or in the event that the Form tutor and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution the parents will then be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this 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 will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within five 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 will also give reasons for her decision.
- 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 solution), they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors who will call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will be referred to the Complaints panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chairman of Governors shall appoint each of the Panel members. The Chairman of Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen 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 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 resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within fourteen days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. 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, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Reviewed: Spring 2009

Next Review Date: Spring 2011

Appendix A

Date:

Example letter for staff.

Dear Parents,

PARENTAL CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

St Helen's School has an enviable reputation for pastoral care. The school is here for both you and your daughter, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. We welcome suggestions and comments from parents, and take all concerns and complaints you may raise with us very seriously. A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response. The accompanying procedure will explain how your complaint will be dealt with and what response and action you can expect.

If you are unsure whether to complain or not, please contact the school as we are here to help. Your complaint or concern will always be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to me and those directly involved. The Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed. You may be confident that any complaint made will not rebound adversely on your daughter.

We hope that we shall be able to satisfy your concerns. I hope that all parents will appreciate our aim is always to work with you as parents in the best interests of your daughters whilst at St Helen's.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Morris
HEAD