



JUNIOR SCHOOL

33a. COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

This policy is applicable to Junior School Pupils, including Day and Boarding and those in EYFS

This policy is available on the College website, or upon request from the Junior School Office.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#).

The College will endeavour to comply with the timescales and procedures set out within this Complaints Policy. It may however be necessary to revise timescales on a case-by-case basis, should complaints be received at or close to the end of a scheduled school term, or to accommodate delays that may result from staff sickness or absence for other reasons.

Aim:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that any complaint is handled sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is:

- Good for relationships;
- Good education practice, and
- Good business practice.

Applicability:

This document applies to current pupils and to past pupils, in cases where the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

PUPILS

The school strives to provide a close, supportive environment in which a pupil with a complaint feels prepared to approach any member of staff. However, a pupil's close relationship with his/her Form Teacher/Tutor naturally encourages him/her to regard that person as the most obvious first point of contact. Boarders are encouraged to communicate any complaints to the Boarding Housemother. Pupils are also encouraged to speak to members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). They may also refer to their House Leader or channel a complaint to the School Council via their Form Representative. Alternatively, it is logical that children of Junior School age may prefer to speak to their parents, who are encouraged to follow the procedure below.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Policy Statement:

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint, made in a reasonable and appropriate way, will be taken amiss or will reflect adversely on the pupil or his/her opportunities at this College. We will investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity:

- To put right any matter which may have gone wrong;
- To review our systems and procedures in the light of the relevant circumstances.

We recognise that a complaint which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment,

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damaging to relationships and also to our internal culture.

Child Protection:

If the complaint concerns a child protection issue, or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed immediately. For the Early Years Foundation Stage this is the Head of Pre-Prep, for Years 1-6 it is the Deputy Head of the Junior School, although parents may refer the matter directly to the Head (who acts as DSL for the Junior School as a whole).

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as any matter about which a parent or guardian of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the College. Complaints may be categorised as follows:

- i. **Education Matters** This category describes those complaints relating to the classroom, the curriculum or additional educational needs.
- ii. **Pastoral Care** This category describes those complaint relates to matters outside the classroom.
- iii. **Disciplinary Matters** This category describes complaints about disciplinary sanctions.

Every parent (specifically, a current parent or legal guardian of a pupil of the College) has the right to have any complaint confidentially and carefully investigated by an adult within the community or, where appropriate, outside it.

THREE-STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Junior School operates a three-stage complaints procedure as follows:

- a. **Stage One** The first stage of the complaints procedure aims to resolve matters informally with staff directly involved. Stage one procedures are acknowledged within one working day and completed within 5 working days of the matter being brought to the attention of a member of staff. The College will aim to provide a response to the complainant within this timescale;
- b. **Stage Two** The second stage of the complaints procedure aims to resolve formal complaints made in writing to the Head of the Junior School (as defined above) or referred to the Head by a member of staff. Stage Two procedures are acknowledged within one working day and completed within 10 working days, but may take longer depending on the complexity of the investigation. The Head of the Junior School will aim to provide a written response to the complainant within this timescale;
- c. **Stage Three** The third stage of the complaints procedure is available to complainants who remain dissatisfied with the Head's handling of the matter at Stage Two, or where the complaint directly concerns the Head. Stage Three procedures are acknowledged within two working days and completed within 10 working days, but may take longer depending on the complexity of the associated investigation. The College will aim to convene a panel Hearing – as appropriate – within this timescale and will endeavour to produce its findings within 10 working days of the conclusion of the Panel Hearing.

Under certain circumstances, extended timescales may need to be agreed, particularly if the complaint arises immediately prior to or during a school holiday period.

STAGE 1: Informal Resolution (Early Years Foundation Stage: Nursery & Reception)

It is hoped that all complaints will be resolved as early and as informally as possible.

If parents have a complaint, it is expected that they would normally first speak to their child's Nursery/Reception teacher. If the teacher is unable to resolve the complaint, he/she will refer the matter to the Head of Pre Prep.

The Head of the Junior School may be involved in informal resolution of complaints at this stage if this is felt appropriate, depending on the seriousness or urgency of the complaint in question, but may decide that the issue needs formal resolution. Whenever possible, the Head operates an 'open door' policy to parents. However, parents may prefer to make an appointment via the Junior School Office.

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Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days of the matter being brought to staff's attention, or in the event that the Head of Pre Prep and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory solution, then parents will be advised to refer the matter to the Head of the Junior School for Formal Complaint Resolution.

However, it is an EYFS regulatory requirement that parents may make a complaint direct to the Independent Schools Inspectorate rather than follow this procedure. (For contact details, please refer to page 5.)

STAGE 1: Informal Resolution (Years 1-6)

It is hoped that all complaints will be resolved as early and as informally as possible.

If parents have a complaint, it is expected that they would normally first speak to their child's Form Teacher/Tutor. The Form Teacher/Tutor may be able to resolve the complaint. He/she may need to consult a subject teacher if it is an academic complaint. He/she may need to pass the parents on to the Deputy Head if, for example, it is a complaint about discipline. The Head of the Junior School may be involved in informal resolution of complaints at this stage if this is felt appropriate, depending on the seriousness or urgency of the complaint in question, but may decide that the issue needs formal resolution. Whenever possible, the Head operates an 'open door' policy to parents. However, parents may prefer to make an appointment via the Junior School Office.

Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days of the matter being brought to staff's attention, or in the event that the Form Teacher/Tutor or Deputy Head and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory solution, then parents will be advised to refer the matter to the Head of the Junior School for Formal Complaint Resolution.

The class teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. In the event that the class teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to speak directly a member of the SLT or to the Head whereupon it is hoped that the concern or complaint may be resolved quickly, usually within one week, and informally.

EYFS complaints will be dealt with as per the process detailed above unless the complaint is actually about fulfilment of the EYFS requirements which must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

STAGE 2: Formal Resolution

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should address the matter in writing to the Head of the Junior School, stating clearly that it is a formal complaint. A record of all formal complaints in both EYFS and main school is kept by the Head for at least three years, including the date on which they were received, and how they were resolved.

The Head of the Junior School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If at this stage the Head of the Junior School has not yet met personally with the parents concerned, she will convene a meeting to consider their complaint. Whilst the Head of the Junior School will strive to achieve a solution as quickly as possible, it may be necessary to carry out further investigations, for example where there are other parties involved. An investigation of a formal complaint will normally be carried out by the Deputy Head of the Junior School, or by another member of the Senior Leadership Team. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept by the members of staff concerned.

Once the Head of the Junior School is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, normally within ten working days of receiving the complaint. The Head of the Junior School will also give reasons to support the decision.

If parents are not satisfied by the Head of the Junior School's written response, they should proceed to Stage 3, as detailed below. Alternatively, if both parties are in agreement, a further meeting, including another member of College management (usually the Head of the College), may be convened before proceeding to Stage 3.

The Junior School will maintain a written record of all complaints made and dealt with at the formal stage of the procedure (regardless of whether they are upheld), indicating whether the complaint was resolved at the formal stage or whether it proceeded to Independent Resolution. The record will also capture any actions taken by the Junior School as a result of the complaint

STAGE 3: Independent Resolution

This stage of the Complaints Procedure will only be necessary should the matter not have been resolved at the former two stages. If this stage has been reached, parents should write to:

The Clerk to the Governors
St Lawrence College
Ramsgate
Kent CT11 7AE

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Parents must write to the Chairman of Governors within 5 days of the date of the Head of the Junior School's decision. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the receipt of the letter of complaint within 2 working days and schedule a meeting to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days. Under certain circumstances, extended timescales may need to be agreed, particularly if the complaint arises immediately prior to or during a school holiday period.

A Panel of at least three people will be appointed by or on behalf of the Chair of Governors. The Governors and all other members of the Panel will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

One person will be appointed to the Panel who will be independent of the management and running of the College. The DfE has advised that individuals who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suited to the independent panel member role. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the police Force might be considered'.

The parents making the complaint are required to provide the Clerk to the Governors with any documentation they wish the Panel to consider. This, together with the College's documentation, will be bundled and circulated to the parents, the Head and the Panel members ahead of the hearing.

The Panel will be convened to hear the complaint and the complainant will be invited to attend and be accompanied if they wish. The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by a legally-qualified person, but as the hearing does not constitute legal proceedings, a legally-qualified person will not be permitted to act as an advocate for the parents. The Panel will speak to the parents directly and the legally-qualified person will only be allowed to clarify points of law should they arise. Parents are required to notify the College in advance of the hearing if they are going to be accompanied by a legally-qualified person.

The role of the panel is to consider the facts and decide whether the complaint is made out. If so, the complaint will be upheld and if not it will be dismissed. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all the relevant facts, the Panel will make findings and recommendations. The hearing may be adjourned if the Panel decides that further investigation is necessary. The Panel will aim to conclude any further investigations within 10 working days of adjournment of the Hearing.

Outcomes

Upon conclusion of the hearing and any subsequent investigations, the Panel will write to the complainant within 5 working days and, where relevant, the person complained about, informing them of its findings and recommendations and the reasons for them. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel may then make recommendations for the College to consider going forward on any of the issues raised, or the School's procedures generally. The Panel has no power to impose sanctions.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will remain available, on the school premises, for inspection by the Chair of Governors and the Head. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.

The Clerk to the Governors will keep a record of complaints considered under this procedure and of their outcomes. The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly, and actions taken by the school as a result of these complaints. The record will also detail the stage at which the complaint has been resolved. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will also be made available upon request.

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. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

In the event of concerns about child welfare, parents and guardians should contact either Independent Schools Inspectorate at:

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ISI
Ground Floor
Cap House
9-12 Long lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Tel: 0207 600 0100
Web: www.isi.net

or, for issues concerning allegations against staff, contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), (Tel: 03000 410888).

Parents of EYFS children may also contact Ofsted and/or ISI, if parents believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Ofsted may be contacted at:

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD
email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 4666

No formal complaints have been registered during the past year.

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Policy Review Schedule

Revision History

Version No.	Revision Date	Summary of change	Approved by	Updated by
1.1	12/03/2018	Set time limits and prescribe panel numbers	Bursar	Bursar
1.2	20/01/2020	Job Titles updated.		ER
1.3	09/10/20	COVID Supplement, recording of complaints	Bursar	Bursar
1.4	14/10/20	Recording of complaints	Bursar	Bursar
1.5	9/11/21	Review with TT Governor	Bursar /HJS	Bursar / HJS
1.6	9/11/21	Revised arrangements for access to complaint records.	Bursar	Bursar
1.7	6/1/22	Minor updates	Bursar	Bursar
1.8	22/3/23	Report number of complaints	Bursar	Bursar