

# Parental Complaints Policy

**ISSR Part 7, Paragraph 33**

**NMS Standard 18**

Review period:	Annual
Review by:	Bursar
Date Reviewed:	August 2018
Date reviewed by Board of Governors:	11 September 2018
Next Review:	August 2019



## PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

St Joseph's College prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to each of its pupils, from EYFS across to Sixth Form, including Boarding. If parents do, however, have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College with care and in accordance with this policy. *The Governing body has ultimate responsibility for meeting all the College's regulatory requirements, which they delegate to the Principal, supported by the Senior Leadership Team. In line with good practice and as part of the Governors' due diligence, the Board of Governors reviews this policy annually.*

St Joseph's College makes its **Parental Complaints Policy** <sup>1</sup>available to all parents of pupils <sup>2</sup>as part of its website, registration packs, Parent Portal and on request to the Principal. The complaints procedure also applies to past pupils<sup>3</sup>, if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered with the College.

The Parental Complaints Policy does not cover pupil exclusions<sup>4</sup>, in respect of which parents are referred instead to the College's Parent Contract, a copy of which is enclosed in all Registration packs, available on the website and also available on request.

In accordance with Part 7 paragraph 33 (b) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, St Joseph's College will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils details of the College's Complaints Policy and associated procedures<sup>5</sup>. **The College will also provide on request, to the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, records of all written complaints <sup>6</sup>during a specified period, the action which was taken as a result of each complaint and whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing under the formal procedure <sup>7</sup>(regardless of whether they are upheld).** <sup>89</sup>

St Joseph's College recognises the importance of dealing with concerns and complaints in a timely, efficient and fair manner. In most cases, concerns will be dealt **with informally by staff** <sup>10</sup>before they reach the stage of a formal complaint.

### What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department, area or about an individual member of staff. **A complaint may arise if a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action <sup>11</sup>by the College.** This may arise for example if a parent believes that the College has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

**Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and that their child will not be penalised for a complaint which is raised in good faith by either the parent(s) or their child.**

<sup>1</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (a)

<sup>2</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (b) + Note 414

<sup>3</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 421

<sup>4</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 421 + Note 418

<sup>5</sup> NMS standard 18, 18.1

<sup>6</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (k)

<sup>7</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (j) (i)

<sup>8</sup> NMS Standard 18, 18.1 + 18.2

<sup>9</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (j) (ii)

<sup>10</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (d)

<sup>11</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 416



## PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints<sup>12</sup>

We aim to resolve any concerns and complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. Where we refer to 'working days' we mean Monday to Friday.

The College's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 30 days of a complaint being received, whether within; or outside term-time. A Stage 3, panel hearing, will be completed within a further 30 days.

The College will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. Sufficient opportunity will be provided for any complaint to be fully discussed with the aim of finding a resolution through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

### Recording Complaints<sup>1314</sup>

The College will **keep a written record of all complaints** and whether they are resolved **at the informal stage, a formal stage<sup>15</sup>, or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken as a result of these complaints**. At the College's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be **kept confidential**<sup>16</sup> except to the extent required by Part 7, paragraph (k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act<sup>17</sup>.

### Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making your complaint we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy; and
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise.

### Making a Complaint

#### Informal Stage

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<sup>12</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (C) + Part 7, Note 422

<sup>13</sup> NMS Standard 18, 18.1

<sup>14</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (j) + Note 430

<sup>15</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33(j) (i + ii)

<sup>16</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (K)

<sup>17</sup> ISSR 7, 33 (k)



## PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Stage 1 – Speaking or meeting with the Teacher/Staff member other than the Principal

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Parents should refer a complaint, in the first instance, to the person most closely concerned with the issue:

#### Education Matters:

If the complaint relates to the curriculum or special educational needs, please discuss it in the first instance with your son or daughter's subject or, class teacher or the Head of Learning Support. They will help you to pass your concerns, if necessary, to the appropriate Head of Department/Faculty/Line-manager. If the concern relates to the Head of Department/Faculty, please contact the Director of Studies or the Vice Principal/Deputy Head of Prep School.

#### Pastoral Care/Disciplinary Matters:

If the concern relates to a pastoral matter, please contact your child's Class Teacher, Head of EYFS or Deputy Head of Prep in the Prep School. For the Senior School, please contact your child's Form Tutor, Head or Assistant Head of School in the first instance, who will refer you to the Vice Principal if appropriate. If the complaint relates to a Pastoral Manager, please raise the matter directly with the Vice Principal.

#### Boarding Care:

If the concern relates to a matter within Boarding, please contact the Head of House in the first instance who will refer you to Head of Boarding if necessary. If the complaint relates to the Head of House please refer directly the Head of Boarding.<sup>18</sup>

#### Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

If your complaint relates to a member of SLT, then please contact the Principal. If the concern relates directly to the Principal, the Chair of Governors should be contacted. The contact details for the Chair of Governors can be found on the College's website – [www.stjos.co.uk](http://www.stjos.co.uk)

#### Financial, Catering, Transport, Administration, Health and Safety and Estate Matters:

A concern or complaint about matters relating to the above areas should be addressed to the Bursar.

- In this way, the matter you have raised should be resolved efficiently and effectively.
- In many circumstances, the person contacted will need to discuss the matter with a colleague or colleagues, and consider it carefully before responding.
- Minor complaints may be dealt with through a meeting with the member of staff, by telephone or by letter
- If staff are asked for an appointment with a parent to deal with a complaint, they will endeavour to arrange the appointment promptly and at a mutually convenient time. Parents who seek an appointment with a member of staff should contact the relevant

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<sup>18</sup> NMS standard 18



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Reception and ensure that they sign in and out of the College prior to and after the meeting taking place.

- Wherever practicable, Staff will respond to and acknowledge a concern within 5 working days. Thereafter the member of staff will establish what has happened and who has been involved. Once parents' thoughts and opinions have been taken into account, the member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter where practicable within 10 working days.

The Staff member will maintain a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 days, or in the event that the staff member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

If, however, the complaint is about the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

### Formal Stage

#### Stage 2 - Submitting a formal complaint

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing<sup>19</sup> and state that they are submitting a formal complaint. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within five working days.
- The Principal (or her appointed representative) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and who should respond to the formal complaint.

Although all formal complaints will be in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.<sup>20</sup>

- In most cases, the Principal or Vice Principal will meet with/speak to the parents concerned, within 5 days of receiving the written Complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to ask relevant staff to carry out further investigations into the matter being raised.
- The Principal will **keep written records**<sup>21</sup> of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for her decision.
- If the complaint is about the Principal, the Vice-Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Vice-Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further.

<sup>19</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (e)

<sup>20</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 423

<sup>21</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (j)



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Once the Vice-Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Vice-Chair will give reasons for his decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure

### Panel Hearing

#### Stage 3 – Writing to the Chair of Governors

- If a parent is not satisfied with the Principal's decision, or in the case of a complaint about the Principal, the Vice-Chair of Governors' decision at Stage 2, they should write or email the Chair of Governors, including, if applicable, copies of the original correspondence and ask for their complaint to be dealt with under Stage 3 of this Procedure<sup>22</sup>. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your communication within five working days. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you.
- At this stage, a panel of three will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about the complaint on behalf of the Governing Body. Parents must address such a complaint, in writing to the Chair of Governors<sup>23</sup>. The Chair of Governors, will appoint a panel consisting of at least three people, two of whom will normally be Governors (which may include the Chair of Governors) and one person who is independent of the management<sup>24</sup> and day-to-day running of the College. None of the panel members will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint<sup>25</sup>.
- The independent panel member will be a person who has held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. Examples of person likely to be suitable are serving retired business people, civil servants, head or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force,<sup>26</sup>
- A parent has the right to attend the panel hearing, and may be accompanied by a relative or friend, if they wish<sup>27</sup>. Legal representation will not normally be necessary.
- The panel hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.<sup>28</sup>
- 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, normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

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<sup>22</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (f)

<sup>23</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (f)

<sup>24</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (g)

<sup>25</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (f)

<sup>26</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 425

<sup>27</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (h)

<sup>28</sup> ISSR Part 7, Note 427



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- 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 the facts it consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations<sup>29</sup>.
- The panel hearing will be completed no later than a further 30 school days following receipt of the Stage 3 complaint. The panel's findings and any recommendations will be given in writing and sent or handed, or emailed, to the parents and where relevant, to the person being complained <sup>30</sup>about normally within 7 school days. A copy of the findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and Principal. <sup>31</sup>
- The Panel's decision on any complaint referred to it is final.
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 require the School to provide you on conclusion of the final stage of the School's Complaints Procedure with the name and address of an alternative dispute resolution provider who has been certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as competent to resolve consumer disputes. However, please note that the College is not obliged to enter into alternative dispute resolution and nor is it willing to do so in this instance.

DfE and ISI Regulation require the College to state the number of complaints registered under the Formal Stages of the Complaints Procedure in the preceding year. **The record of complaints will be made available <sup>3233</sup>on request to the College.**

### Written Complaints relating to EYFS:

St Joseph's College will provide Ofsted and/or ISI on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in line with the College's policy but kept for a minimum of three years.

Any written complaints pertaining to the fulfilment of EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the complaint being received. **A record of any such complaint will be made available to the Independent Schools Inspectorate.** <sup>34</sup>

### Complaints to Ofsted regarding EYFS Service Providers:

<sup>29</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (i)

<sup>30</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (i) (i)

<sup>31</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (i) (ii)

<sup>32</sup> EYFS, E78

<sup>33</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33(b) + Note 420

<sup>34</sup> EYFS, E63, E64, E65 - 3.74-3.75



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Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted by telephone on 0300 123 1231 or by emailing [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk). These details are displayed on our setting's notice board. The Ofsted 'Parents' poster will also be displayed at all times.

### Complaints to Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Regarding EYFS Service Providers:

Parents may complain directly to ISI if they wish. ISI may be contacted by telephone on 020 7600 0100, or by emailing [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net). These details are displayed on our setting's notice board.

Schools will notify parents about an inspection once they have been notified. Once the final inspection report has been provided, they college will supply this to ALL parents, including those that attend the EYFS setting.

### Written Complaints Relating to Fulfilment of the Requirements of the DfE National Minimum Standards for Boarding:

Boarders and/or their parents can contact the Children's Commissioner regarding any complaint about Boarding welfare as follows: <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk> Tel: 0800 528 0731. <sup>35</sup>

### Summary of Timescales<sup>36</sup>

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE
<b>Stage 1 - INFORMAL</b>	Discussion/meeting with relevant member of staff and/or Principal.	Acknowledge within <b>5 working days</b> . Response will be within <b>10 working days</b> .
<b>Stage 2 - FORMAL</b>	Written formal complaint.	Acknowledge within <b>5 working days</b> . Response will be within <b>10 working days</b> .
<b>Stage 3 - PANEL</b>	Complaints Panel Hearing	Acknowledge within 5 working days. Hearing set up within <b>30 working days</b> , giving <b>10 days' notice</b> of hearing. Agenda and papers sent out <b>7 working days</b> in advance. Decision letter with <b>7 working days</b> .

Signed:  
Chair of Governors



11 September 2018

<sup>35</sup> NMS Standard 18, (18.1, 18.2) + B123

<sup>36</sup> ISSR Part 7, 33 (c)



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Signed:  
College Principal

D. Clarke

11 September 2018

St Joseph's College

