



SPRATTON HALL

Complaints Policy and Procedure

September 2023

COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURE

Title: Complaints Policy and Procedure	Responsible: SJSC / RPD / Bursar
Date implemented: January 2006	Last review: September 2023
	Next review: September 2024

Complaints Policy

Spratton Hall has a complaints procedure which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils. The policy is outlined below and is, we believe, implemented effectively. The below details the three-stage process (informal, formal and panel hearing), arrangements for record keeping and confidentiality of correspondence, statements and records.

This policy details complaints from parents and is applicable to all pupils in the school, including those in the EYFS. It is available to all parents and can be found on the school's website. The policy does not cover complaints from members of staff as these are covered by the school's grievance and disputes procedures.

Types of Complaints:

The majority of complaints received by the school fall into the following categories:

- **financial and administrative** (and breach of contract in independent schools);
- **academic** (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- **pastoral care** (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child, accommodation etc); or
- **child protection** (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).
- **EYFS** (the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements)

The School has long prided itself on the high quality of the teaching, pastoral care and management. However, if a situation arises where parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy.

Complaints Procedure

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the informal stage, formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing. The written records are kept on *Engage*, the school's Management Information Service. We always keep a written record of a complaint and any action taken whether it is upheld or not.

All 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 number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available to parents, prospective parents and Ofsted and ISI on request.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly, informally and satisfactorily.
- If a parent has a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's Class Teacher or Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher or Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the appropriate member of staff responsible for the area of complaint, a Head of Department, the relevant Head of Year, a member of the Senior Management Team, or the Head Master.
- Complaints made directly to the Head Master might be referred to the relevant Class Teacher / Form Tutor if the Head Master deems it inappropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff who received the complaint will record on Engage the complaint and the date on which it was received and resolved. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the Class Teacher 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 procedure.
- If a complaint is received during the school holidays, we will aim to respond to the complaint within 10 working days during the Easter and Christmas holidays and within 15 working days during the Summer holidays.

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 Master, to which the Head Master will acknowledge receipt. The Head Master will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head Master will meet with the parents concerned 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 Master to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Master 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, within three working days of the meeting with parents to the Head Master. The Head Master will also give reasons for his 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 resolution), they will be referred to a Governor, who will be appointed by the Board of Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Governor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within twenty-one 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 seven days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if he/she/they wish, although legal representation is not appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complainant's 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.

- The Panel will make findings and recommendations which are provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about.
- The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and Head Master.

Parents can be assured that 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Details of how to contact Ofsted and/or ISI are as follows:

Ofsted – Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.
General helpline – 0300 123 1231; Textphone number – 0160 618 8524

ISI – Ground Floor, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100.

Responsibilities:

Governing Body:

- for adopting the policy, procedures, and guidelines;
- for appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints; when complainants are not satisfied with the school's response;
- for receiving reports and findings from the panel; or
- for receiving reports from the Head Master; advising the Head Master.

The Governing Body monitors the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly. The Governing Body will also monitor the school's response to complaints and any panel recommendations.

Chair of the Governing Body:

- responsible for appointing a panel of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be entirely independent of the management and running of the school, to hear complaints from complainants not satisfied with the school's response.

Chair of the independent Panel:

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;

- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of facts are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be seen by the Head Master;
- any written material is seen by all parties; and
- findings are communicated to the parent and school within seven days of the hearing.

Clerk to the Governing Body:

The Clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the school's response.

The Clerk must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record the proceedings; and
- notify the parties of the decision.

Head Master:

- for the overall internal management of the procedures;
- for ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- for ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request;
- for hearing complaints at the second stage (or appointing a Complaints Co-ordinator to hear them) (see below); and
- for ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the Governing Body.

Deputy Head Master:

- for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints;
- for keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedure; and
- for compiling reports for the Head Master as required.

Bursar:

- for administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints

Heads of Department Subject:

- for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.

Tutors:

- for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

Child Protection Designated Senior Lead Person:

- for receiving any child protection / safeguarding issues.

All staff:

- for hearing any complaints brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff;
- for informing the relevant staff of the complaint;
- for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Deputy Head Master.