



St. James' School

A Woodard School

Complaints Procedure

St James' School
18-24 Bargate
Grimsby
N. E. Lincolnshire
DN34 4SY

[Tel: 01472 503270](tel:01472503270)

[Web: www.saintjameschool.co.uk](http://www.saintjameschool.co.uk)

[Email: Enquiries@saintjameschool.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@saintjameschool.co.uk)

Introduction

St James School aims to provide the highest standards and quality of the 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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

St James' makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils on the School's website and in The Rectory during the school day, and St James' will ensure that parents of pupils 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 pupils.

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 complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Further aims

- Make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of working together
- Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken
- Resolve all complaints within 28 working days of the complaint being received
- Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved. (Note: this information is provided to Ofsted at their request)

- Review regularly at senior leadership level the written record of complaints and their outcomes
- Keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them
- Boarders have the opportunity to contribute their views to the operation of boarding provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution of a Complaint

It is hoped that complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally directly contact the appropriate Head of Department:

Pre-prep:	Mrs. Fillingham-Howarth
Prep:	Mrs. Boardman
Middle School (Years 7-9):	Mr Rose
Upper School (Years 10-11):	Miss Harris
Sixth Form (Years 12-13):	Mr Wilkinson

Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly, and with the minimum of fuss.

- A complaint about a matter concerning fees should be stated in writing to Mr. Major, the Bursar.
- The person dealing with the concern will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved **within five working days**, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 and to raise a formal complaint.
- Concerns made directly to a senior member of staff (e.g Head of Pre Prep, Prep or Senior Depts) may be referred to the Headmaster. In the event of a complaint against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of School Council.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution of a Complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their concern in writing (see Appendix 1) to the Headmaster (or the Chair of the School Council if the complaint is about the Headmaster) at which point it becomes a formal complaint. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, a senior member of staff (likely the Headmaster) not so far involved in the complaint will speak with the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations: written records of meetings held in relation to the complaint will be kept.
- Once the School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed in writing **within 28 days** of the School having received the complaint under Stage 2. The School will also give reasons for the decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of School Council 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 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 will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If a parent seeks to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chairman of School Council, who calls hearings of the Conciliation Committee (Complaints Panel).
- The matter will then be dealt with by the Complaints Panel. 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 school or its representatives. The Chairman of Governors will acknowledge

the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 15 working days**.

- If the Panel (committee) 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 three working days prior to the hearing.
- The parent may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate. Informality and courtesy are expected of all parties at any review hearing.
- If possible, the Panel (committee) will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel (committee) will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of the facts they consider relevant, the Panel (committee) will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete **within seven working days** of the hearing. The Panel (committee) will write to the parent informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's (committee) findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parent, the Headmaster, the School Council, Woodard and, where relevant, the person complained about. Copies will be retained on the School premises for inspection purposes.
- The decision of the Conciliatory Committee is final

Expulsion of required removal

The review procedure to be used for parents who wish to have a decision of an expulsion or required removal reviewed is Stage 3 of this Complaints Procedure. It will be brought to their attention at the point when their child is expelled or required to leave, and they will have a period of seven days in which to make this request. The School will endeavour to complete this review process as quickly as reasonably practicable.

Recording complaints

A record of all formal complaints, including actions and recommendations, is kept by the Headmaster and is reviewed regularly by the Headmaster, SMT and Council to identify whether review or change of practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified, and appropriate interventions made.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them. Specifically, Ofsted and ISI will be provided, 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. These records are reviewed regularly by the Headmaster.

Complaints History

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 St James' School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the Independent Schools Inspectorate:

Should parents, parents of boarders or boarders wish to, they may raise concerns directly with Ofsted and/or ISI; complaints from parents regarding our registered EYFS provision can be made to Ofsted if they wish:

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 776 8849
concerns@isi.net

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M21 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Policy	Date Approved	Body Approved	Author	Date of next review
Complaints Policy	September 2020	School Council	Headmaster	September 2021



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