



ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL
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Complaints Policy

Authorised by: The Board of Governors of St Benedict's School

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1. Introduction

This is a regulatory policy – responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness and compliance of the policy and its implementation lies with the Governors. This includes: monitoring of the policy and its implementation; reviewing effectiveness; tracking any patterns; evaluating the nature of complaints and modifying future practice.

2. Circulation

This policy covers St Benedict’s Senior School and St Benedict’s Junior School and is addressed to all staff and parents. It is published on the School website.

2.1 This policy can be made available in large print or other more accessible format, if required. If you require assistance with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, please contact the PA to the Headmaster who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

3. Policy status

The policy has been approved by the Headmaster and the Governing Body of St Benedict’s School (“the School”). It provides guidelines for handling complaints. It takes account of Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework; and Department for Education best practice guidance.

4. Application

This policy applies only to complaints made by parents (as defined in the policy). Separate procedures apply for child protection issues. This policy does not apply to removal/exclusion decisions (Governors’ Review applies).

5. Stages

This policy describes a three-stage procedure:

- Stage 1: informal raising of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to a member of staff.
- Stage 2: a formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster or to the Headmaster of the Junior School.
- Stage 3: a referral to the Complaints Panel.

6. Policy aim and statement

The aim is to ensure concerns/complaints are managed sympathetically, efficiently and resolved as soon as possible, with appropriate review of systems and procedures.

7. Management of complaints

The number of complaints which went to the formal stage of the process (Stage 2 or Stage 3) in the previous academic year can be requested by current parents from the Headmaster’s PA.

8. Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties

Most concerns can be resolved informally. Parents are encouraged to raise concerns promptly with the appropriate member of staff (academic/pastoral/disciplinary/financial), and to proceed to Stage 2 if unresolved.

9. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should be set out in writing to the Headmaster (or Headmaster of the Junior School) with supporting documents. The complaint will be acknowledged and investigated fairly and independently, with a written outcome normally within 10 working days during term time.

10. Stage 3: Reference to the Complaints Panel

A Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Headmaster, Headmaster of the Junior School or Chair of Governors at Stage 2. The purpose of Stage 3 is to consider whether the Stage 2 investigation and outcome were reasonable in all circumstances and to determine what, if any, further action should follow. If the parent is not satisfied with the School's response to their complaint at Stage 2, they may request referral to this stage.

Stage 3 is not an opportunity to present new facts or new evidence. It is a review of the complaint as raised and investigated at Stages 1 and 2 and of the conclusions reached at Stage 2. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaint procedure.

Withdrawal / discontinuance by a complainant

If a parent withdraws their complaint (or indicates they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed), the School may nevertheless, at its discretion, refer the matter to a Panel (or continue with an already convened Panel) where it considers it appropriate to do so, for example in order to:

- bring the matter to a clear conclusion; and/or
- make findings and/or recommendations that may inform the School's practice; and/or
- address any safeguarding, welfare, regulatory or wider community issues arising.

In such circumstances, the Panel may consider the complaint in absentia and issue findings and (if appropriate) recommendations, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

10.1 The role of the Panel

The Panel's role is to review the Stage 2 process and outcome and to decide on the balance of probabilities and having regard to the material considered at Stage 2, whether the Stage 2 investigation and conclusions were reasonable.

Following this review, the Panel will decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint (in whole or in part); or
- uphold the complaint (in whole or in part); and/or
- make recommendations to the Headmaster and/or to the Board of Governors, as appropriate.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Headmaster or to the Board of Governors as appropriate.

10.2 Composition

A Complaints Panel ("Panel") will be constituted on behalf of the Chair of Governors comprising members of the Board of St Benedict's School and one person independent of the management and running of the School.

10.3 Notification

To request a hearing before the Complaints Panel please write to the Chair of Governors within five working days of the Headmaster's decision. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1-2. Please ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and your full contact details accompany your letter to the Chair. Please state in your letter all the grounds of your complaint and any outcome that you desire. Please also send the Chair a list of the documents which you believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see. The Chair will acknowledge your request in writing within four working days during term time.

11. Vexatious or serial/persistent complaints

The School reserves the right not to progress complaints which it considers vexatious or serial/persistent, in line with relevant guidance.

12. Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law or inspection.

13. Details for Ofsted and ISI

Ofsted and ISI contact details are available at the end of the policy and on request.