

ST. CATHERINE'S BRITISH SCHOOL

A registered charity in the UK and member of HMC & COBIS

Complaints Policy

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FOR PARENTS

SCOPE

AIMS

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way.
- Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously.
- We take action where appropriate.

POLICY STATEMENT

The school strives to create a culture of openness between parents and staff. We place great emphasis on communicating with parents through a variety of formal and informal opportunities, which include, but are not limited to daily drop-off / collection, website, email from teachers and/or appropriate staff, twice weekly newsletters, Partnership with Parents' workshops, parent 'drop-in' and Information Evenings, and Parents' Evenings. In addition, there are regular parent class rep meetings with SLT members, and the Principal meets monthly with the PTSA Chair and Board.

Parents may have a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. We encourage parents to share their concerns with us at the earliest opportunity so we can work together to resolve them.

Time scales – the time scales indicated in this policy refer to term time (the published dates the school is open for students for academic lessons, outside holiday care provision) and for a working week (defined as Monday to Friday only). Where a complaint is made out of term time, every effort will be made to contact the appropriate member of the staff to resolve the complaint.

This policy will be made available to all parents. This is made clear to parents on admission to the school and on the school's website.

Complaints raising safeguarding concerns will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Complaints from staff relating to employment matters are managed through the Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy and are outside the scope of this policy.

STAGE 1 (a) Informal concern

- If a parent, parents or a person with parental responsibility have a concern, they should contact their child's Class/Form Teacher. In the Upper School, the Head of Year would also be informed; in the Lower School, the Head of Key Stage would also be informed. A concern is defined as a worry or dissatisfaction with an aspect of school. The staff member dealing with the concern should respond to the concern in 48 hours, and inform their appropriate line manager, setting out what action (if any) has been taken and the date of the concern.
- The pastoral teams monitor these trends and actions are taken.
- Both the Upper and Lower School SLT groups review concerns on a half termly basis, where overall themes and trends are discussed, and actions planned.
- Concerns regarding the Co-Curricular programme should be referred to the appropriate administrator (Music, Sport, Clubs).

STAGE 1 (b) Informal complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parents by the member of staff receiving the initial concern, then parents have the right to escalate their concern into this stage, and it moves from a concern to a complaint. The complainer must put this in writing to the appropriate Head of School /Deputy Head.
- This stage 1 (b) will then be dealt with by the Deputy Head and/or the relevant Head of School.
- The school may also feel that the concern needs to be more fully investigated and taken on by a Deputy Head and/or relevant Head of School.
- A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction that has not been resolved and requires a formal response.
- The complaint will be investigated by the relevant staff – students, staff and parents spoken to – and then the parents will be officially informed of the outcome within 15 working days of the complaint being received.
- Stage 1 (b) complaints will be recorded on iSAMS and, as above, trends and patterns monitored and actions taken.
- Should the matter not be resolved, then the appropriate Head of School will advise the parents that they may proceed to the next stage of the Complaints Procedure should they so wish, and write to the Principal explaining that they wish to move to Stage 2.

STAGE 2. Formal complaint and resolution

- A stage 2 formal complaint is triggered by parents who have been dissatisfied with stages 1 (a) and (b) and have written to the Principal.
- The parents must make it clear that they intend to escalate the complaint to the stage 2 level and state the reasons why.

- The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint and consulting with staff, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Any complaint referred directly to the Principal without recourse to the Stage 1 procedures will automatically be referred to Stage 1.
- The Principal, along with the appropriate the Head of School, will meet the parents concerned, within 10 working days of receiving the formal complaint (unless exceptional circumstances such as the complainant being on holiday make this time frame impossible), to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations. The Principal will depute the investigation to another member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure there is objectivity and impartiality.
- The findings and recommendations from this further investigation will be collected within 10 working days and then passed on to the complainant. It will also, where appropriate, be shared with the subject of the complaint.
- The Principal will ensure that written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint are kept on file and will be made available to the complainant.
- The School retains a written record of formal complaints as part of its complaints procedure, whether they are resolved at the first formal stage (Stage Two) or proceed to a Governors' Committee hearing (Stage Three) and of any action taken by the school as a result of a formal complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld).
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parent(s) will be informed of this decision in writing, and reasons for the decision given.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- Where the complaint is directed specifically at a Senior Leader dealing with the complaint, the procedure will, by necessity, involve the Principal.
- Where the complaint is directed specifically at the Principal of St Catherine's British School, the procedure will, by necessity, be referred to, and dealt with by, the Chair of Governors.
- All stage 1 (b) and Stage 2 complaints will be looked at by the SLT (monthly) and the ELT (half termly).

STAGE 3. Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Company Secretary at St Catherine's British School, who has been appointed by the 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 will be an individual independent of the management and running of the school.

“People who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments ... Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force...”

DfE guidance on an independent panel member.

- Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Company Secretary to the Governors on behalf of the Chair of Governors. The Company Secretary, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days (unless exceptional circumstances such as the complainant being on holiday make this time frame impossible).
- 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 two days before the hearing.
- The parent(s) may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. The accompanying person should be there in a supportive capacity and can remind or make suggestions to the parent(s) in response to questions from the Panel, however they do not have the right to ask or answer questions on behalf of the parent(s). Legal representation is not appropriate or allowed.
- 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 they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and will communicate their findings and recommendations, together with the reasons for the decision, as soon as possible after the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel will write to all participants (including the complainant, the Board of Governors and, where appropriate, the person about whom the complaint has been made) informing them of the findings, the recommendations and the reasons for this.
- The Panel decision will be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days of the hearing.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where ISI or another such body conducting an inspection requests access to them. Records are retained in accordance with the school's Data Retention Policy.

Parents, and parents of prospective students, can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year by contacting the Principal's PA.

Currently ISI (the Independent Schools Inspectorate) is the regulatory body used for the inspection of the educational provision at St Catherine's British School. Records of all complaints are made available during such inspections.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) inspects the school against the British Schools Overseas Standards. ISI does not normally investigate individual parental complaints but may

consider whether concerns indicate wider regulatory issues.

Governors

The Governors have an important role in ensuring that the School follows the procedures laid out in this policy. They should, through visits and committee meetings, know what the trends are and what the School is doing about actioning those issues.

Appropriate Routes for Raising Concerns

Contacting Governors

The Governing Body has responsibility for the strategic oversight of the School and does not manage the day-to-day operational matters of the School. Parents who have concerns or complaints are therefore expected to follow the stages of this Complaints Procedure, beginning with the appropriate member of staff and progressing through the formal process where necessary.

Whilst Governors are always keen to ensure that concerns are addressed fairly and appropriately, they must avoid becoming involved in individual complaints before the School's procedures have been exhausted, as this could compromise their ability to participate impartially in any later review or complaint panel. Where a parent approaches a Governor directly regarding a complaint, the Governor will normally acknowledge the concern and politely direct the parent to the School's Complaints Procedure and the appropriate member of staff or School leader responsible for handling the matter. If the concern raised is of a safeguarding nature, the parent must be directed to the relevant DSL.

There is also a twice-yearly Parent Liaison Group (PLG) meeting with the PTSA, Class reps, ELT and governors present to ensure open and transparent dialogue, and to give clarity around decisions or issues that are arising in the school.

Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

The School recognises that complainants have the right to pursue legitimate concerns.

However, where complaints become:

1. abusive
2. threatening
3. repetitive
4. vexatious, or
5. disproportionate

the School reserves the right to modify communication arrangements or decline to consider repeated complaints raising substantially the same issues without new evidence.

Any such decision shall be reasonable, proportionate and authorised by the Principal.

Learning from Complaints

The School values complaints as an opportunity for improvement

Following each formal complaint the School will consider whether:

- Policies require amendment
- Additional staff training is needed
- Communication can be improved
- Systems require strengthening.

Complaints and students' requests for appeals against IB Programme decisions taken by the school

- If a student wishes to submit an Enquiry Upon Results (EUR) regarding an IB Diploma or Course grade, the Head of IB advises the student on the prudence of submitting the Enquiry. As a candidate's grade may be lowered or raised as a consequence of a re-mark, the written consent of the candidate or the candidate's legal guardian(s) is obtained before requesting this service. (See Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures for details).
- In keeping with the Diploma Programme: Assessment appeals procedure (September 2016), if an Enquiry Upon Results is unsuccessful, the school will support a student in submitting an appeal if we identify new evidence demonstrating that standard procedures in deriving the student's grade may not have been correctly followed by the IB.
- According to the IB General Regulations Article 17, the IB accepts appeals in relation to five areas of decision-making during an examination session. Appeals are possible against:
 - a. results—when a school has reason to believe that a candidate's result(s) are inaccurate after all appropriate enquiry upon results procedures have been completed.
 - b. a decision upholding academic misconduct, but not against the severity of a penalty
 - c. a decision in respect of special consideration—following a decision not to give special consideration to a candidate as a consequence of alleged adverse circumstances.
 - d. a decision in respect of inclusive assessment arrangements
 - e. an administrative decision not covered by one or more of the foregoing circumstances that affects the results of one or more candidates.

For further information on the appeals process, please refer to the IBO Website [International education - International Baccalaureate®](https://www.ibo.org/en/programmes/diploma-programme/assessment/appeals)