

5.2.1 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Written by	Joe Lewis, Headmaster
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Scope of policy	EYFS, Pre Prep and Prep School

Introduction

Saint Ronan's School has long prided itself on the 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 procedure. Saint Ronan's School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day, and Saint Ronan's School will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware of where they can access it.

Saint Ronan's will make available to parents of pupils, meaning currently registered pupils or former parents when the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

Saint Ronan's will 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.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school and within the scope of this procedure.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

The three-stage Complaints Procedure

STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult an Assistant Deputy Head (Pastoral) and then the Deputy Head (Academic) or the Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- Complaints made directly to a head of department/Assistant Deputy Head, the Deputy Head/the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form or Subject Teacher unless the

head of department/the Assistant Deputy Head/ Deputy Head/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

- The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved **within 5 working days** or in the event that the Form 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, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.
- During holiday periods, the School there may be the need to reasonably adjust these timescales, however the School aim to acknowledge the complaint within one week of the complaint being received and respond formally within 7 working days after the start of next term.
- During the COVID Pandemic, and to give the School some flexibility as a consequence of disruption or staff absence, the time limits outlined are 10 working days in term time and 14 days to respond formally once term has started for those complaints received during the holidays.

STAGE 2 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

- The process of dealing with a formal complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the School to resolution will normally take more than 28 working days for complaints concerning a child in the EYFS and no more than 35 working days for complaints concerning other children. During holiday periods, there may be the need to reasonably adjust these timescales, however the School will aim to acknowledge the complaint within one week of the complaint being received and respond formally within the first 28 working days of the following term for complaints concerning a child in the EYFS and normally no more than 35 working days for complaints concerning other children.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet/speak to the parents concerned, within 10 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 to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within 28 working days of receipt of the decision. Parents will be informed in writing of their right to progress to Stage 3 with the relevant timescale.

STAGE 3 - PANEL HEARING

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they are to write to the Head informing of their decision to do so within 28 working days, whereupon the matter will be referred to the Chairman of the Governors 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 three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chairman of the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 15 working 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be accepted.
- If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its Complaints Policy. The School's arrangements for the Panel Hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance.
- 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). During holiday periods, the Panel will communicate the outcome of the investigation within the first 10 working days of the following term. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.
- Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the **informal stage**, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the school'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 including whether related to boarding.
- 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 except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Saint Ronan's will provide ISI/Ofsted, 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 for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or ISI:

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.]
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net]

Persistent correspondence - where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has supplied the following guidance in a letter to the ISC General Secretary:

'our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the Police Force – might be considered suitable by schools.

Retention

From September 2020 the DfE has advised that complaints which do not have a safeguarding implications should be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Where there is a safeguarding angle:

'Records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation'.

Academic Year 2024-2025	Stage 2 Complaints	Stage 3 Complaints
Number	0	0