



Complaints Policy (Including EYFS and Boarding)

Policy owner: Head of School

Approved by: Directors

Applies to: Whole school, including EYFS and boarding

Reviewed: June 2026

Next review due: June 2027

Introduction

This policy applies to the whole school, including the Junior School, Senior School, EYFS and boarding. It applies to complaints raised by parents or legal guardians of current pupils and to complaints raised by boarders about boarding provision.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action by the School where a resolution is expected.

St John's School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or boarders do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. This policy satisfies the requirement under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

The school keeps under review any emerging patterns arising from complaints.

Complaints should normally be submitted within 30 calendar days of the incident or matter complained about, so that concerns can be investigated promptly and fairly. The school may consider complaints submitted outside this period where there is good reason, where the matter is ongoing or where the concern relates to safeguarding, welfare, discrimination, boarding provision or another serious matter.

Safeguarding and child protection concerns

Where a complaint raises a safeguarding or child protection concern, the matter will be referred promptly to the DSL and managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Where a complaint includes an allegation against a member of staff, supply staff, volunteer or contractor, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer where required.



The complaints procedure may be paused, adapted or run alongside safeguarding, disciplinary, regulatory or external agency processes where this is necessary and appropriate. The school will explain this to parents as far as it is able to do so.

Legal and regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, paragraph 33
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Standard 14
- Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, where applicable
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, where relevant to data protection complaints
- Equality Act 2010

Boarders:

To ensure compliance with National Minimum Standard 14.2, the school maintains a transparent and supportive environment where boarders feel empowered to voice their concerns. Boarders can raise a complaint about any aspect of their boarding provision through multiple accessible channels, including direct discussion with House Staff, talking to senior staff, talking to Form Tutors, the use of anonymous suggestion boxes or by contacting the independent listener. Once a complaint is lodged, the school follows a formalised response procedure that includes an initial acknowledgment within 24 hours and a clear timeline for investigation and resolution. To ensure fairness, the school strictly adheres to a 'no-penalty' approach, guaranteeing that no student will face repercussions or discrimination for raising a complaint in good faith. Information on this process is discussed at termly induction.

The school's separate written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Boarders may raise a complaint themselves, with or without parental involvement, depending on their age, understanding and the nature of the concern. The school will ensure that boarders know how to raise concerns confidentially and how to access the independent listener or other trusted adult. Where a complaint is raised by a boarder, the school will adapt the procedure appropriately to the boarder's age, understanding, welfare and safeguarding needs, while ensuring the concern is recorded, considered fairly and responded to without penalty for raising it in good faith.



Parents:

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be made available to parents on request.

Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

The school will make reasonable adjustments to this complaints process where needed for parents, pupils or boarders with disabilities, SEND, communication needs or other additional needs. This may include assistance with putting a complaint in writing, access to translation or interpretation support, adjusted meeting arrangements or allowing a suitable advocate where appropriate.

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Class teacher/Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved swiftly and to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class teacher/Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of School will usually be referred to the appropriate member of staff, unless the Head of School chooses to deal with the matter personally.
- The person receiving the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and the date submitted. If the matter is not resolved within fourteen calendar days, or in the event that the teacher and the parent fail to reach satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- Where a written complaint relates to the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, the school will investigate the complaint and provide a written outcome to the complainant within 28 calendar days of receiving the complaint. Records of EYFS complaints will be made available to ISI and to Ofsted where required. Parents may contact ISI or Ofsted where this is relevant to the registration or inspection of the provision.

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 of School. The Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.



- In most cases (depending on whether it is term time or school holidays), the Head of School will arrange to meet the parents, normally within seven calendar 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 of School to carry out further investigations.
- The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents informed of this decision in writing within seven calendar days of meeting the parents. The Head of School will also give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the Stage 2 decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. Parents should set out in writing why they remain dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking. The school may ask parents to clarify their complaint or grounds for review where this is reasonably necessary to arrange a fair panel hearing.
- Parents have a period of seven calendar days to raise their complaint to Stage 3.
- A threat of legal action will not, of itself, prevent the school from following this complaints procedure. The school may pause or adapt the procedure where legal, safeguarding, regulatory or external agency processes make this necessary, and will explain its position to parents as far as it is able to do so.

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 IES Vice-President, who will call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- This 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 (see note below). The IES Vice-President shall appoint each of the Panel members. The IES Vice-President will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 calendar 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 two working days prior to the Hearing.

- The parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by a suitable companion. Parents will not be permitted to bring a lawyer with them as their companion or representative.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within fourteen calendar days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Directors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Directors and the Head of School.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Records of the actions taken will be kept and made available to ISI, whether upheld or not.

Parents will be given reasonable opportunity to attend the panel hearing, and the school will facilitate their attendance wherever reasonably practicable. Attendance may be in person or via video conference where appropriate, as agreed by the Panel Chair. However, should the parent not attend, this does not deny the school's opportunity to hold the hearing without the parent, always in conformity with the complaints policy.

Data protection complaints

Where a complaint relates to the school's handling of personal data, the school will acknowledge the complaint within 30 days and respond without undue delay, in accordance with applicable data protection law.

The school will take appropriate steps to investigate the complaint and inform the complainant of the outcome. The school will keep the complainant informed of progress where a response cannot be completed promptly.

Individuals also have the right to raise concerns with the Information Commissioner's Office.



Retention - Complaint records

The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Stage 3 panel hearing. The record will state whether the complaint relates to boarding provision, whether the complaint was upheld and what action was taken by the school as a result.

Complaints that do not have safeguarding implications will normally be retained for at least 7 years, in line with the school's Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule.

Where a complaint has safeguarding implications, records will be retained in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school's records retention arrangements.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State, ISI, Ofsted, another body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, another statutory body or as otherwise required by law.

Note:

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfE to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant.

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive, 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 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. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

On the subject of whether it would be acceptable to appoint former Directors or staff of the school as the independent panel member, the regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former Directors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

Number of formal complaints received under the formal stage of this procedure during the preceding school year: 2.



Appendix A: Complaint Form

St John's School – Complaint Form

This form should be completed by a parent or guardian of a current pupil, or by a boarder raising a complaint about boarding provision, who wishes to raise a formal complaint in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Once completed, please submit this form by email or in a sealed envelope marked "Private & Confidential" to the Head of School.

1. Your Details:

If this complaint is being made by a boarder, please complete the relevant sections and ask a trusted adult for help if needed.

- Name:
- Relationship to pupil:
- Telephone number:
- Email address:
- Pupil's name and year group:

2. Details of Complaint

Please describe the nature of your complaint, including relevant dates, events and the names of any staff or pupils involved.

(You may continue on a separate page if necessary.)

3. Actions Taken to Date

Have you raised this concern informally with a member of staff? If so, please give details, including who you spoke to and what the outcome was.

4. Resolution Sought

Please state the outcome or resolution you are seeking:

5. Additional Information

If you are attaching any documents or evidence to support your complaint, please list them here:

6. Declaration



I confirm that the information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that this complaint is being raised in accordance with the School's published Complaints Policy.

- Signed:
- Date:

For School Use Only

- Date received:
- Received by:
- Stage of complaint: ☐ Stage 1 ☐ Stage 2 ☐ Stage 3
- Complaint reference number: