



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

St Richard's recognises that things can go wrong, and the school is committed to resolving complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. The aim of this policy is to outline the procedures by which parents/guardians may make a complaint. The school values its relationship with the parents/guardians of the pupils who attend the school and consequently offers opportunities during the school year for parents to discuss any complaints they have about their child's progress or arrangements for learning. However, the school recognises that complaints may arise at other times and the following procedures are in place in order to deal with parents'/guardians' complaints.

### **STAGE ONE – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

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

An initial complaint may be made by contact either by telephone or in person with the child's form teacher or matron or the member of staff responsible for the area or action giving rise to the complaint. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint swiftly at this stage. The majority of complaints are dealt with quickly in this manner.

If the complaint is of a more serious nature and/or if the parents/guardians prefer, parents/guardians may contact the Headmaster either by telephone or in person to discuss the complaint. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means and to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction.

### **STAGE TWO – FORMAL RESOLUTION**

If parents/guardians are dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the Headmaster if he has been involved at the informal stage) they may wish to put their concerns in writing to the Headmaster as a complaint. The parents/guardians should make it clear if they wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint.

The Headmaster will investigate the complaint and decide upon the appropriate course of action, which may include a meeting with the parents/guardians concerned or further investigation of the complaint. The Headmaster will keep written records of all submissions received and meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of the

decision in writing. This will normally be within seven school days of receipt of the written complaint, but parents/guardians will be kept informed if, for example, more time is needed to complete the investigation.

If the original concern was about an action by the Headmaster personally, and has already been discussed at the informal stage or the parents/guardians have concluded that it is not possible to discuss it informally, the parents/guardians should put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors, whose details are available on the school website or from the School Office. The Chair of Governors will follow the same procedure and timeframe as outlined above for a formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster.

If parents/guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage Three as below.

### **STAGE THREE – PANEL HEARING**

If parents/guardians seek to invoke Stage Three (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution either informally or formally) they will be referred to the Chair of Governors who will 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 in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the school management team and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors.

The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 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 no later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by another person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

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 14 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 Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint has been made.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

If, after all of the above procedures have been concluded, parents remain concerned about the quality of boarding care, they may raise the matter with OFSTED ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

### **COMPLAINTS ABOUT EXCLUSION**

Please note that a separate Appeal process is in place with regard to Exclusions and can be found in the Admissions, Rewards, Discipline and Exclusions Policy.

### **COMPLAINTS AGAINST SCHOOL STAFF**

If a complaint amounts to, or includes, an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. The complainant will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with the complaint.

September 2010