

**Legal Status:**

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7, paragraph 33 (a) to (k) inclusive of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 in force from 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015 along with Part 6 Paragraph 32 (3) (f) of the Regulatory Requirements, regarding the provision of information being made available.

**Applies to:**

- Stanborough School where the record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three years.
- The whole school along with all activities provided by the school, including those outside of the normal school hours.
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching), the Governors and volunteers working in the school.

**Timescale**

- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school.

**Availability**

This policy is made available to parents, staff and pupils in the following ways: via the School website, within the Parents Policies Folder in the reception area, and on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

**Monitoring and Review:**

- The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.
- The Board of Governors monitor the Complaints Procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- The Board of Governors undertake a formal biennial review of these procedures for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than two years from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Date: November 2017

Lorraine Dixon  
Headteacher

Berton Samuel  
Chair of Governors

## Complaints Policy

Open communication between parents and the school is vital to the personal development of each pupil. Stanborough School encourages parents to have regular contact with the Form Tutor. We want each pupil to feel supported and parental involvement in the school fosters a comfortable learning environment. Parents receive written reports bi-annually and there are two Parents' Evenings in each academic year. The academic progress of pupils is closely monitored each half term, when interim grades are reported and the achievements of pupils are noted on the Honour and Progress Rolls.

Form Tutors will make prompt contact with parents, should the need arise concerning absences or behaviour of a pupil. Initial communication to the school from parents should be directed to the Form Teacher. Notifications or requests for absence or complaints should be in writing to the Form Teacher. Parental enquiries on school policy, procedure or events should be directed in writing to the Registrar. Parental enquiries about a disciplinary matter should be addressed in writing to the Senior Teacher, for all pupils. Parental enquiries about staff should be addressed in writing to the Assistant Head. Parental enquiries about financial matters should be addressed in writing to the Bursar. Parental enquiries about a boarding school matter should be addressed in writing to the Preceptor.

Stanborough School will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to pupils will be of the highest order. However, if parents have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. We are always willing to listen to concerns and anxieties, parental and pupil concerns being of particular importance. We aim for the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom our pupils are entrusted. Dealing with parental concerns is a vital part of the ethos and mission of Stanborough School. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional wellbeing and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of pupils at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a pupil at the school, parents or guardians of a pupil at the school or several parents or guardians of pupils at the school. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process, Stanborough School will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate.

Parents also have a right to make a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Details of how this may be done are given at the end of this procedure. The School also has a 'whistle blowing policy' that is detailed in the staff handbook.

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

*(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally if parents feel able to voice them as soon as they arise. Obviously, the more information the school gives to parents the less scope there is for misunderstanding. Parents will be encouraged to give feedback, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology, if appropriate, will resolve any issues. Every effort will be made to allay concerns at this stage and with the least possible formality. Our ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint, as through open dialogue, a resolution should always be accomplished.
- Concerns can be addressed orally or in writing to the form teacher, Senior teacher, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher who will seek to resolve issues of concern within 48 hours.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within (five) 5 school days, or in the event that the House staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

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## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

*(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

- Any formal complaints should be addressed in writing to the Headteacher and be signed and dated.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned, normally the day of receiving the complaint so as to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The school will reply to written enquiries within three (3) school days of receipt. All written correspondence should be addressed to the school's address or may be delivered by hand to Reception with the addressee clearly marked on a sealed envelope.
- Within ten (10) school days of receiving the complaint, the Headteacher will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. If the complaint is valid in whole or in part, The Headteacher is to acknowledge this and write an explanation along with a clarification of any misunderstanding. The Headteacher should also make an admission if the situation could have been handled better or differently and make an assurance that the event complained of will not recur. Lastly, the Headteacher should write an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated and review school's Procedure in light of the complaint. The parents will always be kept informed in writing. A note will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Headteacher, an approach should first be made to Berton Samuel, the Chair of the Board at Stanborough School whose contact details are: Berton Samuel, Chair of the Board of Governors, Stanborough School, Stanborough Park, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 9JT, Telephone: 01923673268 Email: berton\_samuel@yahoo.com This should include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Governors are obliged to investigate the matter and will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure

The Headteacher will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- Meet with the complainant or contact them;
- Clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the issue;  
interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning and
- Keep notes of each interview.

When the investigation is complete, the Headteacher will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint.

Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- An apology
- An explanation
- A clarification of any misunderstanding
- An admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated
- An undertaking to review school Policies in light of the complaint.

## **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

- In the rare event when an enquiry cannot be dealt with by the school, parents may write to the Education Director of the School Board at the British Union Conference, Stanborough Park, Watford, Hertfordshire. This correspondence will provide the opportunity to have enquiries heard before a panel consisting of at least three people. The Panel will consist of three persons (3) not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Education Director of the School Board, Panel Convenor, will reply to all oral and written enquiries within five (5) school days of receipt and schedule a hearing to take place within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the referral. If the

complainant or Headteacher wishes to submit information in writing to the Panel this should be sent to the Panel Convenor at least five (5) days before the date of the hearing.

- A written record of the complaint will be kept in the Headteacher's office, that when related to individual complaints, are a classified document, except when access is required by the Secretary of State or an inspection body.
- The complainant, who could be parents or guardians, may be accompanied to the panel hearing by up to two other individuals.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five (5) working days of the Hearing.
- A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:
  - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
  - available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Headteacher.
- The complainants will have the right of appeal to a higher authority, namely the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) whose contact details are given at the end of this policy.

As far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the complainant will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

#### **Role of the Panel Convenor is:**

- To confirm to all parties in writing the date, time and venue of the hearing;
- To receive and distribute any documentation to be read before the hearing;
- To meet and welcome all parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- To record the proceedings and
- To notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

The wording of any letters will be agreed with the Chair of the Panel.

#### **The role of the Chair of the Panel is to ensure that:**

- Procedure is properly followed;
- The procedure for the hearing of the complaint is explained to all parties and that they have the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- All parties are put at ease, especially those who are unfamiliar with such a hearing;
- Proceedings are kept as informal as possible and that everyone treats each other with respect and courtesy;
- The Panel operates in an open-minded and independent way and
- Time is given for all parties to consider 'new' evidence.

#### **The order of the Proceedings for hearing of the complaint:**

- Welcome, introductions and explanation of the proceedings by the Chair.
- The complainant is invited to explain the complaint.
- The Headteacher may question the complainant.
- The Panel may question the complainant.
- If there are any witnesses for the complainant, each one is invited to the hearing in turn and in each case the witness is invited to speak. The Headteacher may then question them, followed by the Panel. In each case the witness may leave after their evidence has been given.
- The Headteacher is invited to explain the school's actions.
- If there are any witnesses for the school, they are treated in exactly the same way as the witnesses for the complainant.
- When the Chair is sure that all parties have asked all they need to, the complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.

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- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within 3 school days following the day of the hearing.
- Both parties leave together whilst the panel decides on the issues.

#### **Options open to the Panel:**

The Panel may:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not re-occur.

#### **After the Hearing:**

The Chair of the Panel agrees with the Convenor the wording of the letter to be sent to both parties. The Convenor will:

- Ensure that the letter is sent out in accordance with the agreed time scales and procedure as stated in Stage 3 of this policy;
- Write up the notes of the meeting and gives a copy to the Chair of the Panel;
- Ensure that any recommendation to change school policies or procedures is put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board of Governors.

The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents

#### **Confidentiality**

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except;

- Where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- Where any other legal obligation prevails

#### **Record keeping for the Whole School**

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, or proceed to a panel hearing, is kept by the Headteacher for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Proprietors and Board of Governors examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to ISI, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint. Parents may contact the Headteacher to ask for the number of formal complaints made during the previous academic year.

#### **Child Protection**

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Headteacher (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure). For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue relating to the Headteacher, this must be reported immediately to Ms Lydia Dean (Nominated Governor for Safeguarding) who will inform the LADO immediately and certainly within one working day whilst keeping the Chair of Governors informed. The Head teacher must not be contacted or notified. Ms Lydia Dean liaises with Hertfordshire Local Authority. Subsequently, any complaint that involves a potential child protection against a Governor or the Chair of Governors, the person making the allegation or having a concern must immediately contact the LADO. The Chair of Governors will be kept informed, unless the allegation is against the Chair of Governors.

#### **Complaints from External Bodies**

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils will be dealt with on a general basis,

### **Policy for Dealing with Complaints from Staff**

Stanborough School aims to be a listening and responsive school. We encourage staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones, which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints, will be resolved quickly and informally.

- All staff who have any complaint or cause for concern should speak to their line manager in the first instance. If this is not appropriate they should bring the matter to the attention of one of the Senior Leadership Team.
- A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and major complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- All complaints will be investigated within fourteen days and a formal letter will always be written as 'closure', indicating how the issue has been dealt with and what the outcome is.
- When a member of staff is dissatisfied with the outcome and has discussed this with the Headteacher, the matter should be referred to the Proprietor. In the case of an employment grievance, the procedure is outlined in the staff handbook.

### **Grievance, Disciplinary and Capability Procedures with reminders to all about the school's expectations**

This Complaints Procedure is totally separate from any Disciplinary or Capability Procedures. Should a complaint lead to concerns on the part of the Headteacher or Board about the capability or conduct of a member of staff, these would not be discussed or dealt with within this procedure. Additionally, this procedure does not apply to members of staff who would need to follow the school's Grievance Procedure. In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to ISI should they wish to, the relevant contact details are:

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Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

Telephone: 02076000100

Web: [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)

Email: [info@isi.net](mailto:info@isi.net)

# COMPLAINTS TREE

## Procedure for complaints by Parents or Members of Staff

Form Tutors Years 7 to 111

Teaching Staff

Support Staff

