

STAMFORD ENDOWED SCHOOLS

Concerns and Complaints: Policy & Procedure

Introduction

At the Stamford Endowed Schools (SES) our aim is to work in close partnership with Parents to provide the best education we can for all our pupils.

Despite our best efforts we recognise that, from time to time, we may not always get everything exactly right.

If you have any concerns about your child's education or welfare at school, then ***please*** contact an appropriate member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

Our promise is that we shall:

- take all such expressions of concern seriously,
- follow them up promptly, and
- deal with them sensitively and professionally.

Two things tend to make parents and pupils reluctant to express concerns:

- A fear that the school won't see the issue to be important:
if it is important to you, it is important to us.
- A fear that there may be repercussions for the pupil:
under NO circumstances will the school discriminate against a pupil because of expressions of concerns or complaints. We are also very experienced in ensuring that, if other pupils are involved (e.g. in a case of bullying), there are no repercussions from other quarters.

However, for us to deal with problems efficiently and effectively, we need to know about them as early as possible.

In dealing with these matters, we recognise the importance of confidentiality, fairness and ensuring that no one suffers unjustly.

Whom should you contact? This depends on the nature and seriousness of the concern, but the following is a guide:

- for a minor day to day matter, the right person is likely to be the relevant teacher or the form tutor;
- for a more serious academic concern, the appropriate person will be the relevant Head of Department or the Head of Year;
- major issues should come straight to the Head of the School your child attends;
- matters regarding finance, fees and non-academic services should go to either the Finance Manager or to the Bursar.

Contact numbers are shown below.

If you feel that an expression of concern has not been handled properly, or you remain dissatisfied please contact the Head. He/she will do all they can to resolve your concern. If you are unhappy with the way that your concern has been handled, please come back to the Head.

If you still remain unhappy, then please contact the Principal. He will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your concern or complaint so it can be resolved.

Finally, if you still feel that your concern or complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may contact the Clerk to the Governors who will offer to convene a meeting with a small panel of Governors at which you can again discuss your unresolved concern or complaint. A person independent of the Governing Body will be invited to join the panel.

At each stage, we shall endeavour to deal with your concern or complaint as quickly as possible and we shall always keep you fully informed of progress.

Relevant contact numbers and addresses are shown below:

Stamford School	01780 750300
Stamford High School	01780 484200
Stamford Junior School	01780 484400
The Director of Operations and Clerk to Governors	01780 750340
The Finance Manager	01780 750303
The Principal	01780 750310

STAMFORD ENDOWED SCHOOLS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE¹

Introduction

The Stamford Endowed Schools have long prided themselves on the range and quality of the educational opportunities and on the care and welfare provided to their pupils. Where Parents wish to make a complaint about their son or daughter's education, or their care and welfare and are unhappy and seek action, they can expect the complaint to be treated seriously and professionally by the Schools in accordance with the procedure set out below. It is the ambition of the Schools for complaints to be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils without unreasonable delay. This procedure also applies to pupils including boarders and to staff.

In DfE's *Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures* 2016 issued January 2016, the difference between a concern and a complaint is defined:

'A 'concern' may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'. A complaint may be generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure should be invoked through the Levels outlined within their procedure'.

Level 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is expected that concerns and complaints will be brought promptly to the attention of an appropriate member of staff so that they can be resolved quickly and informally.
- If Parents have a concern or 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 alone cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Year (Stamford School and Stamford High School) or the Deputy Head Pastoral (Stamford Junior School).
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or member of the SLT will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless the Head of Department or member of the SLT deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be

¹ In this document the word Parent refers to *custodial* Parent or Guardian with legal responsibility for the child.

resolved within 5 (five) school days or, in the event that the member of staff and the Parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then Parents will be advised that they may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Level 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the Parents may seek a formal resolution and should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. Acknowledgement of the complaint should be made formally and in writing within 24 hours of receipt.
- In most cases, the Head will meet or speak to the Parents concerned, normally within 2 (two) school 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. These records will be kept for at least three years. Serious complaints and their outcomes will be reviewed annually by the Principal

- 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. This should occur within 10 school days of the written complaint being received. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If Parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may request, in writing, for the matter to be referred to the Principal. The Principal will normally speak to the Parents concerned, normally within 2 (two) school days of receiving the written complaint and arrange to meet them with the Head so that all the details can be explored.
- There may be occasion when a complaint may come straight to the Principal. In most cases, where appropriate, the Principal will direct this complaint to the relevant Head to deal with. However, on occasion the Principal may investigate in the same way as a Head at the beginning of the Level 2 formal resolution procedure. If this is the case, The Principal will keep this record and communicate it to the Head and relevant staff as appropriate as well as maintaining a Principal's level complaint log. If parents are not happy with the decision, then they may proceed to Level 3 of this procedure.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and Parents and the Head will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his decision. This should occur within 10 school days of the written complaint being referred to him.
- The Principal will make a written record of all meetings, and any necessary interviews held in relation to the complaint. These records will be kept for at least three years.
- If Parents are still not satisfied with the decision they will be advised that they may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Level 3 of this Policy.

- Irrespective of whether a complaint proceeds to Level 3, the Principal will review serious complaints and their outcomes and will report to the Governing Body, at their general meeting in Summer Term, the number of formal parental complaints received during the academic year, i.e. those that have reached Level 2, and their success or otherwise of their resolution and complaints of a Level 2 nature are reported in full to the Governance sub-committee prior to this meeting
- Parents with children in the EYFS may wish to direct their complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Level 3 – Appeal to a Panel Hearing

- Where a parent is not satisfied with the response at Level 2 and indicates a wish to take the matter further to a Level 3 complaint, a panel hearing will take place unless the parent later indicates that they are not satisfied and do not wish to proceed with the hearing.
- If Parents seek to invoke Level 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Appeal Panel.
- Parents must put their request for their complaint to be referred to a Governors' panel in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 (ten) school days of receiving the Principal's decision.
- Panels will be provided with clear terms of reference and guidance which will enable them to reach a final decision within the specified timescale.
- The matter will then be referred to the 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 (ten) calendar days.
- The hearing may be either sequential or round table with all parties present and this will be determined by the Chair of the hearing.
- 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 3 (three) calendar days prior to the hearing.
- Parents may be accompanied to the meeting of the Panel by one other person. This may be a relative or friend though parents may not be represented by a lawyer.
- The Principal and the Head will attend, other relevant members of staff may be invited as appropriate and determined by the Chair of the hearing.
- The Clerk to the Governors will make a written record of the meeting. These records will be kept for at least three years.

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the Parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. In this case the Clerk to the Governors will record in the notes of the meeting that a resolution has been reached. Once approved by the Chairman of the Panel, a copy of the written notes of the meeting will be sent to each of the Panel members, the Parents, the Principal and the Chairman of Governors within 5 (five) calendar days of the meeting. The Clerk to the Governors will retain the original copy of the notes of the meeting signed by the Chairman of the Panel.
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the Parents, the Principal, the Governors, the complainant and, where relevant, any person(s) complained about. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations is available to governors, headteacher and Principal for inspection at any time at Brazenose House and another copy in the relevant school(SS, SHS, or SJS) to which the complaint refers.
- 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Parents and the Principal will be informed in writing, by the Clerk to the Governors, that further investigation is being carried out.
- The Panel will make every effort to reach a decision on the complaint within 10 school days of the Hearing. Where delay seems possible the Clerk to the Governors will write to the Parents and the Principal advising them of the delay and outlining an alternative schedule.
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the Parents, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, any person(s) complained of.
- The decision of the Panel will be final in all cases unless Parents consider that the nature of their complaint, if unresolved, is such that it is a matter for the Secretary of State for Education, the Charity Commission or the Courts or any other statutory body.
- If the complaint is not resolved, then parents will be informed in writing that they may use 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' (ADR). Parents will be provided with the name of a certified ADR provider and will also be told whether the school intends to use ADR in that particular instance. Use of ADR by schools and parents is voluntary; however, schools must provide information to parents even if they do not intend to use ADR. ADR decisions will be binding on the school where this is agreed between the ADR provider and the school.
- Parents and all staff can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and with strict confidentiality. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept strictly confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Independent Schools Standards Regulations; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. For complaints relating to children in the EYFS then records of these complaints will be made available to the Department for Education and to the ISI on request. All Level 3 complaints will be reported to the Governance Committee on a termly basis.

Record Keeping

Issued: May 2017

Each School will keep a log of complaints received at Level 2 and Level 3, which states the details of the complaint and

- I. whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- II. action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- III. 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.

The relevant member of the SLT needs to be informed of informal complaints which do not progress to Level 2 so that patterns can be determined. Where the Principal has investigated as a Head, a log will be kept in the Principal's office.

Each log is checked for patterns by the Head and the governors. These checks are recorded and discussed at SET with the Principal.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents can make a complaint to the Department for Education (DfE), OFSTED or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) if they so wish, although it is expected that complaints will go through the School's complaints procedure first.

- Records of such complaints are kept for at least three years.
- Complainants will be notified on the outcome of any investigation within 28 days of having received a complaint.
- The school will provide Ofsted and ISI with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result.

Georgina Carney DfE Mowden Hall Staindrop Road Darlington DL3 9BG Georgina.Carney@education. gsi.gov.uk	Independent Schools Inspectorate CAP House 9-12 Long Lane LONDON EC1A 9HA Telephone: 020 7600 0100 Email: info@isi.net
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Or Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231; text/phone number 0161 618 8524.

Additional information about complaints can be found in Government Guidance [here](#)

NUMBER OF FORMAL LEVEL 2 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-17:

30

NUMBER OF THESE COMPLAINTS WHICH PROCEEDED TO FORMAL LEVEL 3 COMPLAINTS IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-17:

0

BOARDERS - CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Boarders have a wide range of channels of communication available to them. It is hoped that the ethos of the Boarding Houses enables students to voice and discuss any concerns or problems openly with the House staff.

In addition, the Heads of each School are available to boarders as for all students in their school.

Boarders also have direct access to Mr Hodgson at Stamford School, Mrs Evans at Stamford High School and Mrs Hughes at Stamford Junior School, who are independent of the Houses and specifically available to Boarders before school and often late afternoon, as well as throughout the day for all students.

Teaching staff are also available as part of the pastoral structure for all students, as well as the school nurses, matrons and welfare officers, whom the students may visit with medical problems, but who also lend a listening ear.

The telephone numbers of an independent listener are also available to the students, as well as confidential access to the School Medical Officers. How to raise matters of concern as well as the telephone numbers of Childline and other helplines/information and advice centres are displayed in all boarding houses. If necessary, fully confidential meetings with outside counsellors can also be arranged.

There are telephones available to students within the Houses, and they can use the office phone if necessary. All students have an individual email address, and there are computers at each house that are linked to the School network. It is becoming very common for older students to have their own mobile phone and laptops and we recognise how useful they can be. However, students must abide by the mobile phone and laptop policies as described in their House handbook and displayed in the House.

All boarders have more formal opportunities, generally through House councils and meetings, to raise issues of concern and make suggestions for the development of boarding. Details of how these are organised within the separate Houses are included in the individual House handbooks. All boarders are encouraged to express their views and make suggestions on how boarding provision can be improved, as well as to raise matters of concern. Pupils will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

If the procedures mentioned above are not successful in resolving a boarder's concerns, then they should follow the Complaint's Procedure above starting at Level 2.

Matters raised are discussed as appropriate by staff and decisions/responses fed back to boarders. Opinions are always given serious consideration, and will be responded to.

Parents

All staff at the Stamford Endowed Schools aim to work closely with parents to ensure that pupils reach their potential both in personal development and academic achievement. We recognise the particular needs of parents of boarding students to be kept closely informed of the welfare and academic progress of their children.

Telephone/fax numbers and email addresses of all staff involved in boarding are supplied to parents and every effort is made to keep parents informed by their preferred means of communication.

House emails and answer phones are checked at regular intervals, and parents can contact the school directly during the working day. Parents should feel able to contact any of the staff involved with boarding as they wish.

At Stamford High School discrete Parents evenings are arranged on the Friday afternoon of half-terms and exeat weekends, so that parents unable to attend regular consultation evenings can meet subject staff. Individual arrangements can be made at Stamford School for any parent unable to attend any parents evening. At SJS, parents can see their child's Form Tutor on any Friday by prior appointment.

Concerns

If parents have a matter of concern or complaint they should raise this with the member of staff they feel most appropriate. All such matters will be raised and discussed with senior staff, and parents kept fully and swiftly informed.

Parents may also contact the Department for Education whose address is above or the Local Authority Social Services Department or OFSTED on: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD; general helpline 0300 123 1231; text/phone number 0161 618 8524.

Other documents to refer to:

[Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016](#)
[Departmental advice for maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and local authorities January 2016](#)

Notes on the Stamford Endowed Schools' Formal Complaints Procedure For Parents:

1. Although every attempt will be made to adhere to the time schedules included in this document it must not be construed that these schedules are in any way contractually or statutorily binding on the Schools.

2. In any cases where the nature of a complaint involves an allegation against a member of staff which could lead to disciplinary action being taken against that member of staff, any subsequent investigation of the allegation, and other aspects of the Parents' complaint, will be secondary to the Governors' published disciplinary procedures for staff. This may have implications for the schedule for resolving the Parent's complaint.

3. The relevant contact addresses and telephone numbers are:

General school contact address and number for all staff including the Head (which is the school office number)

The Director of Operations, 17 St Paul's Street, Stamford, PE9 2BE
Tel: 750340

The Finance Manager, 17 St Paul's Street, Stamford, PE9 2BE
Tel: 750303

The Principal, Brazenose House, St Paul's Street, Stamford, PE9 2BE
Tel: 750310

The School Offices
SJS Tel: 484400
SHS Tel: 484200
SS Tel: 750300

The Clerk to the Governors, 17, St Paul's Street, Stamford, PE9 2BE
Tel: 750340

OFSTED Tel: 0300 123 1231

Independent Schools Inspectorate Tel: 020 7600 0100

Governors' Committee Review: Governance 2017
Formal Governor Review reported: Autumn 2017