



COMPLAINTS POLICY

This Policy was approved by the <i>Trustees</i> :	SUMMER 2022
The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the:	<i>Headmaster and Proprietor</i>
Monitoring will take place:	<i>Annually</i>
This Policy will be reviewed every two year, or more regularly in the light of any significant new developments. The next anticipated review date will be:	Summer 2024

This policy applies to parents of all pupils in St Edward's School

Introduction

St. Edward's prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by either of the Schools in accordance with the joint Schools' Complaints Policy. The Complaints Policy is available to all parents of pupils on both the Schools' website and in the School Offices during the school day.

Parents may request the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure, received by the School in the preceding school year by contacting the Main School Office in the respective school.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is a complaint. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise. St Edward's welcomes comments and suggestions from parents and takes seriously any concerns they may raise.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within **five working days** if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the

Schools' target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will normally be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the Schools will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to Stage 3 (a panel hearing). At the Schools' 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
- 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)
- The school will record any actions taken as a result of a complaint, whether or not it is successful.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

PROCEDURE

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

Whilst there is a comparable system in place for handling of complaints in St Edward's Preparatory School and St Edward's Senior and Sixth Form School, the person(s) involved in dealing with the complaint in Stages 1 and 2 will be different and for that reason, complainants should refer to the appropriate procedure for the School concerned.

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. St Edward's will respect the complainant's desire for confidentiality and correspondence will only be shared with those who are dealing directly with the resolution of the complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If parents have a complaint, they should in the first instance contact their child'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 for him/her to consult Director of Pastoral if it is a pastoral/disciplinary matter or the Head of Faculty if it is an academic matter.

If it involves more than one subject area, the Director of Studies will be consulted.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Faculty/the Director of Studies/the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless it is deemed appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

Should the matter not be resolved **within 7 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 directly against the Headmaster, parents should address their complaint to the Proprietor at St Edward's School, Alpha Schools, Tudor House, 651 London Rd, High Wycombe HP11 1EZ

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution – complaint heard by the Headmaster

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally **within five 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 Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for their decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Proprietor (or designated Director representative in their absence) will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Proprietor may also call for a briefing from members of staff and may wish to speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Proprietor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Proprietor will give reasons for their decision.
- Complaint(s) about the Proprietor or any individual Director should be made in writing to the Headmaster at St Edward's School, Cirencester Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, GL53 8EY.
- A decision at Stage 2 will be made as speedily as possible and normally within 10 working days, if the complaint is made during term time.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should, within 21 calendar days, proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
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Stage 3 - Panel Hearing – complaint heard by the Directors

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they must notify the Directors within 21 days from receipt of the outcome of Stage 2. Parents should set out why the complainant is not satisfied with the response at

Stage 2 and the action the complainant would like the School to take to resolve the matter.

- A panel will be appointed to deal with the complaint and the Directors will notify the parents of the names of the panel members.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Two of the Panel will be Directors and one independent member will be appointed by them. This person shall be independent of the management and running of the School **and will normally be a senior manager from another independent school.** Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Directors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 21 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 normally **not later than five working days** prior to the hearing.
- All parties will be asked to provide any relevant documents in advance and in good time before the panel hearing date. A failure to comply may result in a postponed hearing.
- The parents may attend and be accompanied at the hearing if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- A representative of the School, normally a member of the senior management team to be present at the hearing to respond to queries by the Panel or the Parent as required.
- 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 can:
 - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - Recommend changes to the school's systems/procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it as soon as practicably possible and normally **within five working days** of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) is provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Trustees and the relevant Head.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing.
- The School will keep a written record of any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. All 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 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requests access to them.

