



# St George's College

WEYBRIDGE

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy applies to parents of children currently attending St George's College.

If you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's life at school, please contact an appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. We take expressions of concern seriously and wish to follow them up promptly. We know that things can go wrong and we want to be able to sort things out.

If you believe something has gone wrong and you wish to make a complaint, the procedures below describe how parents can expect to be treated. In dealing with such matters, we recognise the importance of confidentiality, fairness and ensuring that no one suffers unjustly. This is particularly the case with respect to the student; under no circumstances would the College discriminate against a student because of the expression of a complaint.

Our procedures have three stages, informal, formal and an appeal process.

### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively and it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. A complaint received in the school holidays may take longer to investigate and resolve, but the school will endeavour to respond with its findings as soon as practicable and certainly within 28 days for a Stage 1 or 2 complaint. A Stage 3 complaint received in the school holidays will be dealt with as quickly as practicable and certainly within 8 weeks of receipt. The following timings refer to term time dates.

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. We hope that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. Parents should normally contact their child's Head of Year or the relevant Head of Department. You should get an acknowledgement within 3 term time working days and it is hoped that the matter will be resolved by this person. It may be necessary to consult with one of the Deputies or subject/ group tutor in order to try to reach a resolution.
3. If a complaint is made directly to the Headmistress or a Deputy, unless they feel it is appropriate for them to deal with the matter themselves, the issue may be directed to the Head of Year or Head of Department.
4. The member of staff dealing with the complaint will keep a written record and record the date on which it was received.

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5. Complaints should be resolved within 14 term time days of receipt or within 14 term time days after the recommencement of term (full or half) following from the receipt of a complaint during a holiday period. If a satisfactory resolution has not been achieved in this time, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint to Stage 2.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved under the informal procedures of Stage 1, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress.
2. The Headmistress will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 term time working days and will arrange to meet parents normally within 7 days, but certainly no more than 14 days of escalation of the complaint to Stage 2.
3. The Headmistress will keep a written record of meetings and interviews that may be necessary for her to establish as far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts.
4. The Headmistress will attempt to find a resolution and if necessary this will be made by her and parents will be informed in writing within 21 days during term time of the receipt of the formal, written complaint. The Headmistress will give the reasons for her decision.
5. Parents may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure if they are not satisfied with the Headmistress's decision.

### **Stage 3 - Appeal Hearing**

The following describes the process for the Appeal Hearing open to parents who have failed to reach an earlier resolution in the first two Stages. It may also be used to make a complaint against the Headmistress.

1. Parents should write to the Clerk of Governors at the College address indicating the nature of their appeal/complaint. The Clerk should acknowledge your request within 3 term time working days.
2. The Clerk will ask that the Governors convene an Appeal/Complaints Panel. The Panel should consist of not less than three people, all of whom should be totally unaware of the nature of the issues under consideration. Two members of the Panel should be Governors and the third must be someone who is independent of the management and running of the school.
3. The Clerk must then, with as little delay as possible, arrange a mutually acceptable time for the parents, Governors and Headmistress to have an Appeal/Complaints Hearing. This should happen within 4 term time weeks of receipt of the complaint at Stage 3.
4. The parents and Headmistress will be asked to submit their own statements in writing at least 7 days before the Hearing. All such material will be sent in advance of the hearing to all parties.
  - i. At the Appeal/Complaints Hearing, the Governors will hear the issues brought by the parents and the Headmistress independently and may submit questions to both the parents and the Headmistress.

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- ii. The parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person, who will not normally be legally trained.
- iii. The Clerk will record the proceedings.

The Panel can:

- i. dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
  - ii. uphold the complaint in whole or part;
  - iii. decide upon appropriate action to resolve the complaint;
  - iv. recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures.
5. The Panel's decision is final and a copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, in writing, within 5 working days.
  6. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmistress and Governors.

**Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. A written record is kept of all complaints, their outcome, and whether they are resolved at the informal, formal or appeal hearing stages. In addition, a written record of any and all action taken by the school as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld, is kept.**

**There was one formal complaint received in the school year from 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019.**

2 September 2019

**This policy should be displayed in:**

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