



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

SCOPE: This policy applies to the parents of all pupils in the school, including those in the EYFS, and to parents of past pupils (but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered as a pupil). The policy does not apply to parents of prospective pupils.

POLICY REVIEW

Latest Review Date	Reason for review	Reviewed by	Formally adopted by the Governors
November 2020	Annual review	J Mobbs	30 th November 2020

Period of review	Annually
Review date	November 2021

This policy is available to parents on the school website, and a copy can also be obtained from the school office. The parents are made aware of the existence of the policy through the Parent Handbook which is issued to all new parents and is published on the school website.

PERSONNEL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Stage 1 Informal	Stage 2 First Formal	Stage 3 Formal Panel Hearing
Form teacher / subject teacher, Head of Department, Deputy Head <i>Contact directly at school or through the school office or office@stmichaelschool.com</i>	Headmaster (Mr J Mobbs) <i>Contact the headmaster's PA at school or headspa@stmichaelschool.com</i>	Chair of Governors (Mr Mark Stennett) <i>Contact via Headmaster's PA at school or chairofgovs@stmichaelschool.com</i>

Introduction

St. Michael's has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This Procedure takes the place of any previous guidance issued by the school on this matter. Except in exceptional cases, complaints are dealt with initially at Stage 1 and progress through the procedure until a resolution is reached. Where working days are referred to, time scales are counted in term-time days. A complaint received in the School holidays will be considered to have been received on the first school day after that period.

Parents should note that letters to the Headmaster addressed 'Private and Confidential' will not be opened by anyone other than the Headmaster and that this may result in a delayed response if the letter is received in school during a holiday period.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a concern, they should normally 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 a Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster. Normally the complaint will be resolved at Stage 1 within seven working days.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Teacher, or whoever is dealing with the complaint, will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within seven school days or in the event that the Form Teacher, or whoever is dealing with the complaint, 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. Parents are asked to confirm in writing that they are satisfied that the complaint has been resolved at Stage 1 within 10 days of receiving a response from the school.

If a parent is not satisfied with the response to their complaint, they will be advised to formalise their complaint in accordance with the formal procedures set out below. Parents have 10 school days from the point of receiving the response to their complaint in which to proceed to Stage 2. If no formal complaint is raised and no written confirmation that the complaint has been resolved is received in these 10 days, then the complaint will be assumed to be resolved.

Parents wishing to raise a complaint with their child's form teacher or any other teacher during school holiday periods should contact the school office.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution - Headmaster

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster clearly stating that they are making a formal complaint. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Headmaster will contact the parents concerned, normally within 3 school days of receiving the letter of complaint, to discuss the matter. This will

normally be at a meeting with the parents called by the Headmaster. 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. Meetings may be minuted by the Headmaster's PA. Normally, the matter should be resolved within 10 school days of receiving the complaint.

In the event that a complaint is received by the Headmaster on the last day of term or in the school holidays the Headmaster will endeavour to respond to the complaint within the same time frame as term time, but the availability of evidence or staff (including the Headmaster) for an investigation may mean that the response may take considerably longer and may need to be deferred to the next term. If this is going to be the case the parents will receive a letter to inform them of when their complaint will be considered.

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 his decision. Parents are asked to confirm in writing that they are satisfied that the complaint has been resolved at Stage 2 within 10 days of receiving a response from the school.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they will be advised by the Headmaster to proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. Parents have 10 school days from the point of receiving the response to their complaint in which to proceed to Stage 3. If no letter to the Chair of Governors is received and no written confirmation that the complaint has been resolved is received in these 10 days, then the complaint will be assumed to be resolved at Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing (Formal Procedure)

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Chair of Governors at the school address outlining the nature of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will write to the parent(s) to acknowledge receipt of the complaint normally within 2 school days of receipt. The Chair and Headmaster would consider any complaint of this nature to be extremely important and would seek to resolve the issue as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Having considered the nature of the complaint the Chair of Governors will liaise with the Clerk to the Governors to convene a hearing 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 detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Following DfE guidance, a person who has held a position of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be considered suitable to be the independent member of the panel. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired businesspeople, civil servants, heads or senior members

of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 school days of the Chair receiving the complaint giving the complainant 5 school days' written notice of the panel (unless this is during a school holiday in which case it may take longer or it may be deferred to the start of the next term).

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 school days prior to the hearing.

The parents are allowed to attend the panel hearing. 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 10 school days of the hearing. At this point the Chair of 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 any recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or by letter to the parents (the complainant) and, where relevant, the person complained about. The panel's findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school's premises by the Headmaster and the Governors.

Parents can, if they wish, make a complaint to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Contact details for these two bodies can be found at the end of this policy.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; they also may have to be disclosed if the school is ordered by the court or the information commissioner to disclose them. Knowledge of formal complaints will be limited to the Headmaster, those directly involved and the Chair of Governors. Any action taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

Record Keeping

Records of all complaints, and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing, will be kept by the school for at least six

years. Similarly, a written record of the actions taken by the school as the result of each complaint will also be maintained (regardless of whether or not the complaint is upheld). Records of complaints are made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Formal Procedures in the last year (2019-2020)

One complaint was made verbally but no written complaint ensued, and the file was then closed.

EYFS

In addition to the above, the following applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):

Written complaints about the **fulfilment of the EYFS requirements** will be investigated by the Headmaster using the procedures outlined above for the Formal Resolution Stage (Stage 2). The Headmaster will notify the complainant of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of the complaint will be kept confidential (as above) but will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

If a parent believes the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements, they are welcome to contact Ofsted or ISI via the Contact information given below.

Please note, a more general complaint relating to a child in EYFS is not subject to the 28 calendar day time limit and the timescales for this would be the same as for the rest of the policy.

USEFUL CONTACTS

The Chair of Governors is Mr Mark Stennett. Correspondence for his attention should be addressed to him personally, marked "Addressee only" and sent to the school where it will be forwarded to him. Alternatively, the chair can be contacted by email chairofgovs@stmichaelschool.com

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) can be contacted via their website www.ofsted.gov.uk, by telephone 0300 123 1231 (General Helpline) or by Textphone (0161 618 8524) or by post Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) can be contacted via their website www.isi.net or by telephone 020 7600 0100 or by post Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

APPROVAL

The policy was reviewed by the school's Board of Governors against the Independent Schools Standards Regulations (2014) and the ISI Commentary on the Regulations (September 2020) on 30th November 2020 and was approved for full adoption and implementation.