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**Contents**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. SCOPE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. POLICY AIMS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. TIMESCALES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. St Faith's takes pride in the quality of its teaching and pastoral care and in the openness of its relationship with its parents. St Faith's is committed to delivering a high quality of academic teaching and pastoral care. This policy provides a structure for the resolution of such complaints as parents may from time to time have about particular aspects of the provision made for their children's education at St Faith's. We welcome suggestions and comments from parents, and we aim to deal properly, within a reasonable time and in a courteous, efficient and fair way with any complaints parents may raise.
- 1.2. Wherever possible, the School seeks to resolve complaints in a timely manner through an informal process, resorting to a formal process only where informal means have not been successful.
- 1.3. The School will make this policy available to parents of current pupils on the school website and in hard copy from the School Office, free of charge. On request, details of the Parental Complaints Policy and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be provided to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.
- 1.4. The School believes and works on the basis that, in the interests of everyone involved, parental complaints are almost always best dealt with in a timely manner and through an informal process not least because in most cases families and the School will need to continue to work together. Accordingly, as a general principle, the School will usually seek to address all parental complaints informally in the first instance but will take into account any parental representations in this regard. However, the School will determine the appropriate level at which a parental complaint or concern will be considered and reserves the right to escalate a complaint to a higher level, or consider a complaint at a lower level, if appropriate.
- 1.5. As a guide, a complaint may be treated as a formal complaint, under Stage 2 of the complaints procedure, without going through the informal process first, if the School considers that the complaint contains allegations that are serious and/or complex and/or are against senior members of staff and/or if the School considers that the nature of the complaint otherwise warrants a formal investigation from the outset.

**2. SCOPE**

- 2.1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem, any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. A complaint may be about a member of staff, a department, a service provided (e.g. catering, cleaning etc) or the School as a whole, relating to any aspects of the School or the provision of facilities or services.
- 2.2. The Parental Complaints Policy has been created to deal with any complaint that does not fall under one of St Faith's other Policies as set out below.
- The Admissions Policy for complaints regarding Admissions.
  - The Pastoral, Behaviour and Discipline Policy and the Anti-Bullying Policy for the handling of Disciplinary and/or Bullying issues.
  - Any Safeguarding or child protection concerns will be dealt with under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
  - Any formal complaints received in relation to data protection concerns would not normally be dealt with under this procedure, but should instead be dealt with through the school's Data Protection and relevant Privacy policies.
- 2.3. The relevant policies mentioned above are accessible to parents on the school's [website](#) or can be provided upon request, at no charge.
- 2.4. St Faith's makes its Complaints Policy available to all parents of pupils on the School's website [www.stfaiths.co.uk](http://www.stfaiths.co.uk) and in the School office during the school day. The School will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.5. This Complaints policy applies to parents of current pupils and parents of past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School. All references to 'parents' means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates and includes guardians and carers.
- 2.6. To enable effective review, the School expects complaints to be raised within 90 calendar days of an issue first arising; complaints outside this timeline will be referred to the Chair of the St Faith's Committee who, acting reasonably, will determine how the School will proceed.
- 2.7. Parents are therefore expected to proceed with their complaint in a timely and reasonable manner. Depending upon the circumstances, the School may, acting reasonably, treat a complaint as closed if a parent has not proceeded within the relevant timeframes.
- 2.8. In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### 3. POLICY AIMS

- 3.1. We wish to ensure that:

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Parents who wish to make a complaint know how to do so, initially on an informal basis and, if necessary, through a formal procedure;
- We respond to such complaints in a courteous and efficient way;
- All complaints are managed in the timescales set out in this policy and where this is not possible, such as where a complaint is received during a school holiday (which may cause a delay in collecting information, for example, owing to staff absence), the timescales as set out in the policy may be extended;
- Parents understand that we listen and take complaints seriously and confidentially;
- We take action where appropriate;

3.2. If a parent is not satisfied with the response to a formal written complaint, there is a procedure that they can follow and provision for them to attend a meeting with a Complaints Panel.

3.3. The Policy operates on the basis of the statements below.

#### **4. SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

4.1. St Faith's is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all pupils and a 'culture of vigilance' to safeguard and protect all in its care, and in its application of all aspects of its 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'.

#### **5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT**

5.1. The School is committed to treating everyone as equal irrespective of their religion or belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity status, or age. Equally these characteristics will be recognised and respected, and the School will inculcate a positive culture of tolerance, equality and mutual respect.

#### **6. TIMESCALES**

6.1. Unless there are exceptional circumstances and in the interests of a prompt resolution and a full and fair investigation, initial complaints must be raised within three calendar months of an issue first arising. A complaint raised outside of this timeframe should therefore include details of the reason(s) for any such delay and it will be at the School's discretion as to whether to accept the complaint or not.

6.2. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday when the School is open during term time, excluding bank holidays. The School's term dates are published on the School's website. Accordingly, complaints that are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt. Complaints continuing to progress during School holidays may take longer to resolve due to the non-availability of relevant staff. The School will take reasonable steps to limit any such delay where practicable.

6.3. In complex cases, or due to significant disruption to School life or unavoidable staff absence, it may also take longer to resolve a complaint. For example, the School may require more time to conduct a full and fair investigation and/or convene a panel. The School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. If there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the School will notify the parent(s) and inform them of new timescales as soon as possible.

6.4. It may be necessary to delay or suspend an investigation where external agencies are involved, such as the police, the Teaching Regulation Agency, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and/or where parents begin legal action against the School in relation to the complaint. The Head or

Chairman of the St Faith's Committee of Governors, as applicable, will consider whether or not to suspend the complaints procedure until the legal proceedings, or other statutory agencies' involvement, have been concluded. In doing so, the Head or Chair of St Faith's Committee of Governors, as applicable, will take into account advice from appropriate external agencies, and its legal advisers, where applicable.

## 7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 7.1. In the event that a conflict of interest exists in relation to a complaint, then the member of staff or Governor(s) who has/have the potential conflict of interest ('the conflicted party/parties') cannot be involved in the complaints procedure and their place in the complaints process (if any) will be taken by another member of staff nominated by the Head, or another Governor (as appropriate).
- 7.2. If the conflicted party is the Head, the complaint will be dealt with by a Governor nominated by the Chair of the St Faith's Committee.
- 7.3. A conflict of interest can arise in a number of ways, including the following by way of example:
- The individual making the complaint is also a member of staff or Governor;
  - The individual making the complaint is related to or has a close personal relationship with a member of staff or Governor; or
  - The subject of the complaint is related to or has a close personal relationship with a member of staff or Governor.

## 8. MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

### 8.1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution.

- 8.1.1. Most complaints are resolved quickly and informally by talking directly to the appropriate member of staff, or by emailing them, and this is the right thing to do first. Be as clear as possible about your complaint and what you seek to be done about it so that this can be considered.
- 8.1.2. The School will usually acknowledge the complaint by telephone, email or letter **within two working days**, indicating the immediate action that is being taken and the likely timescales for response or resolution. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 8.1.3. The best person to approach is your child's tutor. The tutor will make a written record of your complaint and the date on which it was raised. If time is required for investigation and response, we will aim for this to occur **within 14 working days**.
- 8.1.4. If you feel that the tutor is for whatever reason not the right person to talk to you may wish to speak, as appropriate, to one of the following:
- The appropriate Head of Department (ask in the School Office for the name if you do not know it). Complaints raised with a Head of Department will usually then be referred to the relevant teacher.
  - The Head of Pre Prep, Mrs Louise Wakefield (for general education and pastoral issues in the Pre Prep).
  - The Director of Pastoral Care, Mr Critchley, or the Head of House (for general welfare and pastoral issues in Years 3-8).

- The Headmaster or the Deputy Head, Mr Davenport, (for concerns about your child's next school).
- The Deputy Head (Academic), Mrs Davies (for complaints about your child's curriculum, overall academic progress or teaching group in Years 3 to 8).

8.1.5. If you fail to reach a resolution that satisfies you or if no resolution is reached **after 14 working days** you should make your complaint formally to the Headmaster as in the next section: Formal Resolution.

## 8.2. Stage 2: Formal Resolution.

8.2.1. If your concern has not been resolved on an informal basis then you should put your concern in writing. In this communication to the Headmaster you should state clearly that you are raising a complaint. You should also detail the outcome sought. The Headmaster will consider your complaint and decide on the appropriate course of action to take.

8.2.2. In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to or meet the parents concerned, **within 14 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Meetings at this stage would normally be between the Headmaster and the parents only.

8.2.3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to either carry out or delegate the carrying out of further investigations. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the concern.

8.2.4. Once the Headmaster is satisfied, as far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed by email or letter of this decision in writing and the reasons for it **within 28 working days** from the receipt of the formal complaint.

8.2.5. If parents cannot accept this decision or remain dissatisfied, they should refer the matter to the Panel within **14 working days** of receipt of the date of the letter or email from the Headmaster detailing the outcome of the formal complaint, as detailed in the next section.

## 8.3. Stage 3: Panel Hearing.

8.3.1. If there is a failure to reach a resolution of your complaint through informal means or with the involvement of the Headmaster, you should address your complaint in writing to the Chair of the St Faith's Committee, care of St Faith's, Cambridge, CB2 8AG. This will normally only be considered if all other stages of the complaint procedure have been completed.

8.3.2. The school will forward your letter to the Chair. The complaint will then be referred to a Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, two of whom will be Governors nominated by the Chair of the St Faith's Committee and the third of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. However, where the complaint is about the governance of the school the Panel will consist of at least three persons who are independent of the management and the governance of the school. Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the Governors of the school. The Chair of the St Faith's Committee will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable within **28 working days**.

8.3.3. The Panel will consider the merits of the complaint and all facts that they consider relevant. The Panel will not normally consider new allegations that have not been raised at an earlier stage however, the Chair of the St Faith's Committee and/or the Panel shall have discretion to permit evidence if relevant to the matters to be considered.

8.3.4. 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 will be supplied to all parties **not later than seven days** prior to the hearing.

8.3.5. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one person. Legal representation is not encouraged as the procedure is designed to be an internal procedure that is not overly formal or legalistic. Parties should be at ease to be able to have free and frank discussions about the issues under discussion.

8.3.6. 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.

8.3.7. The remit of the Panel and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

#### 8.4. Panel Findings.

8.4.1. After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts the Panel consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- make recommendations.

8.4.2. The Panel will write to or email the parents, **within 14 working days** of the hearing, informing them of its findings and the reasons for its decision.

8.4.3. The Panel's findings and its decision and its recommendations, if any, will be communicated in writing or by email to the parents, to the Head, to the Governors and, where relevant, to the person about whom the complaint has been raised. The Panel's decision will be final.

8.4.4. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

8.4.5. A written record of all complaints will be maintained and will record whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. The record will include (as appropriate and subject to compliance with GDPR and confidentiality obligations) action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.

8.4.6. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records 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 Act requests access to them.

#### 8.5. Persistent Correspondence.

8.5.1. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure and treated accordingly.

## 8.6. Parents of Children in the Foundation Year (Upper EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)).

8.6.1. Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. Where children are in our Foundation Year we will investigate all written complaints relating to the requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation **within 28 days of having received the complaint.**

8.6.2. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to Ofsted. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

8.6.3. Parents of children in the Foundation Year may make their concerns known to Ofsted if they wish to do so.

8.6.4. Contact details for the relevant organisations are:

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

ISI  
CAP House  
9-12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA

General helpline 0300 123 1231  
Textphone number 0161 6188524 or  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

020 7600 0100 or  
[concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

## 8.7. Records of Complaints.

8.7.1. The Independent Schools Standards Regulations require the School to publish the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year. In the academic year 2023/24, the number of formal complaints was 5.

8.7.2. The School recognises the value of recording even concerns resolved informally, to allow patterns to be identified and monitored. The member of staff dealing with the concern will, with reference to the nature of the complaint, use their professional judgment to determine whether a matter resolved informally should be recorded on the School's Complaints Log.

8.7.3. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 or under other legal authority or court order.

8.7.4. If the investigation of a parental concern leads to action having to be taken under staff or pupil disciplinary procedures, such action is handled confidentially within the School and parents are not entitled to details of any such procedures or related sanctions imposed other than to know that internal procedures are being followed.

8.7.5. We will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

8.7.6. A record of complaints is kept for at least three years.

#### **8.8. Reporting Unsatisfactory Outcomes.**

8.8.1. If, after all stages of the above complaints procedures are exhausted, and the outcome reached is still considered by the Parents to be unsatisfactory, Parents may wish to make their concerns known to ISI and they can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email mail to: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net).

8.8.2. The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 require the School to provide you on conclusion of the final stage of the School's Complaints Procedure with the name and address of an alternative dispute resolution provider who has been certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as competent to resolve consumer disputes. These details are set out below for the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR). However, please note that the School is not obliged to enter into alternative dispute resolution through CEDR, and nor is it willing to do so in this instance.

The Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution, "CEDR"  
100 St. Paul's Churchyard,  
London EC4M 8BU  
United Kingdom

C Hyde-Dunn  
Headmaster