



St. Francis' College Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The 'College' refers to all the staff and pupils of the Prep department and Senior School which includes Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS), Pre-prep (Key Stage 1), Prep (Key Stage 2), and Senior School (Key Stages 3-5)

The College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents¹ and takes seriously any complaints and concerns raised. If parents do have a formal complaint², they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State, or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (amended), or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Timeframes

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days³ if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is the College's target to complete the first two stages of the procedure (below) within 28 working days if a complaint is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. If an appeal is made during term time the College's target is to complete that process within 28 working days of the date the appeal is lodged and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

¹ The term 'parent' also includes guardians and any other persons with legal responsibility for a St Francis' pupil.

² Any complaint made in writing, including email, will be regarded as a formal complaint.

³ For the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the College will keep a written record including the stage at which it was resolved. At the College's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information: the date the complaint was raised, the names of the pupil(s) and parents involved, a description of the issue, records of all relevant investigations (if applicable), witness statements (if applicable), the name(s) of the member(s) of staff handling the complaint at each stage and copies of all relevant correspondence (including emails and notes of phone conversations).

All correspondence, statements and records relating to the individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

STAGE 1 INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- Parents should normally contact their daughter's Form Teacher or, if related to boarding, the Head of Boarding. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher or Head of Boarding cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for that member of staff to consult the appropriate Head of Key Stage or Year Co-ordinator. They in turn may need to refer to the Head of Prep, Deputy Headmistress' or the Headmistress.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress' or Head of Prep will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher, Head of Boarding or other appropriate member of staff unless the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress' or Head of Prep deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher, Head of Key Stage, Year Co-ordinator or Head of Boarding will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 7 term time days, or in the event that the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress' or Head of Prep and the parents 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 a complaint concerns the Headmistress, parents should make it directly to the Chairman of Governors.
- To facilitate an effective investigation and speedy resolution, a parent must notify the College of their complaint within 10 working days of the matter first coming to the attention of the parent.

STAGE 2 FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put any complaint in writing to the Headmistress. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmistress will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 working days of receiving the complaint (notwithstanding availability of College staff during school holidays), to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out some further investigations.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmistress 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 in writing within 28 working days of receipt of the formal complaint. The Headmistress will give reasons for her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmistress the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmistress and for all relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff and in most cases speak to, or meet with, parents to discuss the complaint. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. The decision letter will advise parents if they are not satisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the complaint to a panel hearing, in line with the College's complaints procedure.

STAGE 3 APPEALS PROCEDURE

- If, following a failure to reach a resolution via stages 1 and/or 2, parents seek to invoke Stage 3, the normal route of an appeal will be via the Headmistress to the Chairman of Governors, who has the authority of the Board of Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. This should be done within 10 working days of the Headmistress' formal response.
- Under Stage 2, the Complaints Panel will consist of two Governors who will not be directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint and a third member to chair the Panel who is independent of the College. The Chairman of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days and arrange a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 days during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods and within 21 working days.

- The Panel may need to convene to determine whether further information is required and, if this is deemed necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint and any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish; whose purpose is to be a supportive ‘friend’ and witness, but not to act as an advisor. This person may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, nor will electronic recording of any proceedings.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents’ complaint immediately without any 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 will reach a decision and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it normally within 7 working days of the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel’s findings and its recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmistress, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made.
- A record of these letters will be kept for six years.

Complaints Relating to Statutory Framework

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated by the College in accordance with this procedure. The outcome of the investigation will be notified to the complainant within 28 working days.

The College will provide ISI/Ofsted with a written recording of all complaints made about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements during any specific period and actions taken as a result of each complaint. The record of such complaints will be kept for at least six years.

Parents can complain directly to Ofsted or ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting EYFS requirements.

Ofsted may be contacted on:
0300 123 1231 or by email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on:
0207 600 0100 or by email concerns@isi.net

There have been 2 formal complaints the last academic year 2017 to 2018.

Reviewed By	B Goulding
Effective From	September 2018
Next Review Due	September 2019