St Mary's School
Gerrards Cross

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff Responsible	Head
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
Date of Last Review	September 2026
Date of Next Review	September 2027

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

AIMS

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint (or concern), they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

This policy is intended to guide the procedures of the school and allow for transparency in our process in the event of a cause for complaint.

The School will not consider complaints received more than two months after a pupil's final attendance date at the School, unless the School is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply.

LEGAL REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

RELATED POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Admissions Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Marking Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy

PROCEDURE

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. St Mary's School Gerrards Cross has three stages of complaint level, which a complaint can be escalated through.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- If parents have a complaint, they should look to contact the most appropriate member of staff. This could include the relevant form tutor, the Head of Key Stage (Head of KS3, Head of KS4, Head of Sixth Form) or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with SLT or the Head.
- Where there is a need to seek further clarification regarding the exact nature of the complaint, the member of staff will contact parents directly. It is expected that clarification from parents is provided in full within **10 school days**. Should the school not receive the necessary clarification, school will complete Stage 1 on the basis of the information initially received and sign-post parents to Stage 2 of the process which requires written submission of the complaint.

- Complaints made directly to the Head will be referred to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team, unless the Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of the staff will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received, and give a copy to the Head. Should the matter not be resolved within **10 school days** following receipt of final clarification from parents on the issues of concern, or in the event that satisfactory resolution fails to develop, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with **Stage 2** of this Procedure.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (Stage 1), then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head **within 20 school days** of receipt of the Stage 1 communication. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. Please note that writing a letter to the Head does not automatically trigger a formal complaint. Complaints will only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at Stage 1.
- In most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned or seek additional clarification in writing, normally **within 8 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations which they will endeavour to complete **within an additional 8 school days** of contact with parents.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, as well as any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint whether or not the complaint is upheld.
- Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to **Stage 3** of this Procedure.

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, they must do so in writing **within 20 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 response.
- Moving on to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution via Stage 1 or Stage 2), parents will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors (Bursar), who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. 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. The Clerk to the

Governors (Bursar), on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as possible and normally **within 15 school days.** Should there be a delay in scheduling the Panel hearing due to the availability of governors and Panel selection criteria as outlined above, parents will be informed accordingly.

- 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 **three school days** prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Parents may choose to not attend the hearing if they wish but the school should seek to accommodate parental availability for dates.
- 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 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.**
- 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, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made. The record of complaints must be made available for inspection by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

For Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints, a written record will be kept of the complaint, and any actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld).

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 2008 Act requires access to them.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

The record of complaints is kept for 7 years. We will notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation **within 28 days** of receipt of a complaint.
Parents may make a complaint directly to the Department for Education or to the Independent School Inspectorate should they so wish. Contact details are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
Telephone 020 7600 0100. concerns@isi.net

Department for Education, sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BT
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

For EYFS – Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Telephone 0300 123 4666 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The School will provide ISI and Ofsted on request with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS

The number of formal complaints made in the academic year 2024-2025, was 3. This policy is published on the school website and this information is available by contacting the Head's PA.