



Complaints Policy

This policy applies to Steephill School, including the EYFS setting.

Policy Author: Helen Millward, Headteacher

Reviewed and approved by Full Governing body: **20.9.24**

Next review due: September 2025

Policy statement

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care 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. The Complaints Procedure has reference to *Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) 2024*.

This policy applies to parents of current pupils or parents of former pupils if the complaint was raised while their child was still a pupil at the school.

All contact, information and records will be kept completely confidential. Hard copy correspondence is kept securely by the Head and any electronic communication is kept in the Head's secured area of OneDrive. All issues concerning one child are kept in a dedicated folder and not a shared folder. The records include the process at each stage and the outcome, whether upheld or not.

Records of individual complaints will be kept for at least 7 years, in accordance with data protection principles. Where there is a safeguarding angle, records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should contact their son/daughters' Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with the Head.
- Class Teachers will respond to a complaint or enquiry within 2 school days or give a good reason why this will take longer and set a new deadline.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Any complaint to the Head will receive a reply within 2 school days and resolution will also be within this time. If it is not possible to offer resolution within 2 school days then a new deadline will be agreed.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the Class Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the 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 then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.
- All written complaints at Stage 2 will be recorded and notes made on file and entered into the complaints log.

- The Head will meet with or phone the parents concerned within 1 school day of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. These will be completed within 10 school days.
- Once the Head is satisfied that all 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 the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Complaint against the Head

If the complaint is against the Head, the complainant is advised to direct that complaint to the Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors and the Vice-Chair will follow the stages as above.

If the complaint is against a governor, the complainant is advised to direct that complaint to the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Chairman will follow the stages as above. In the event where a complaint is made against the Chairman, the Head will nominate another governor to receive the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints panel, who will acknowledge receipt within 3 days.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will consist of 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. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Governors. The Chairman, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as is practicable and within 10 school days from the date of acknowledgement.
- If the panel deem 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 4 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. It is not the intention that the parties should be legally represented at the hearing.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's concern immediately without need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the panel will form a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 school days of the hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of the 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 complained of.

- The actions taken through the process and at the end of the process will be kept on record (in the Head's online files) whether the complaint is upheld or not.

EYFS

This policy applies to written complaints. Any issue within EYFS will be resolved within 28 calendar days.

In the case of parents with pupils in the EYFS setting, should parents feel that the EYFS requirements have not been met in full, parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI/OFSTED if they so wish. Their contact details are:

ISI:

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA Phone: 020 77768849

or e-mail via the ISI website: info@isi.net

OFSTED:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M21 2WD Phone: 0300 123 1231

or e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.* However we are required to provide written evidence of all complaints upon request from Ofsted or ISI together with the action taken.

* Correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential except in so far as required of the School by paragraph 6(2)(j) of *The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003*; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any legal obligation prevails.

During the preceding academic year, the school received 1 formal complaint.

(Of which 0 progressed to a panel hearing.)

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Steeptill School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all 3 stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Steephill School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Steephill School.