St. Andrew's School

Complaints Policy

Maintenance

Policy Written By	**Emma Steinmann-Gilbert**
Date of Policy	**01/09/2026**
Next Review	**01/10/2027**

Approved by The Director of Schools, Deborah Leek-Bailey – 01/09/2026

Complaints Policy

Status and publication
This policy has been approved by the Principal and Governing Body (Proprietor) of St. Andrew's School. This policy is made available on the school website and can be made available in large print or other accessible format.

Purpose and Aims of the Policy
The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents, carers and others who have a stake in the school. The Governing Body believes that constant feedback is an important ingredient in self-improvement and raising standards. Pupils, parents, carers, or other adults who have concerns or complaints should feel that these can be voiced and be confident that they will be considered seriously in a sympathetic, efficient manner and at the appropriate level.

This policy takes account of Part 7 of the Regulatory Requirements 2014 of the Department for Education.

This policy also applies to complaints concerning the handling of personal data. Such complaints will be investigated in accordance with the School's complaints procedure, relevant data protection legislation and guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Application
This policy applies to all sections of the school, including the EYFS. The policy applies to current parents or legal guardians and applies to a parent whose child has recently left the school, if the complaint was raised before the child left. If parents wish to appeal the decision to exclude, the matter will be referred in line with the process set out in Stage 3.

Please let us know if you have any cause for concern or dissatisfaction as soon as possible. We recognise that a concern, which is not resolved quickly and fairly, can soon become cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and to our school culture. Parents and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at this school. The policy however distinguishes between a complaint or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint, which is made in writing that will require investigation.

If you are concerned about the safety of your child, you should immediately notify the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and confirm this in writing to the Principal.

Three stages
This policy sets out a three-stage concerns and complaints procedure:
Stage 1: informal raising of a complaint raised orally or in writing to a member of staff i.e. Class Teacher or Assistant Principal.
Stage 2: formal complaint in writing to the Principal
Stage 3: a reference to the Complaints Panel (this is the stage when the Head of UK Independent Schools for Education Development Trust would become involved)

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the resolution of all complaints starts at Stage 1 and works sequentially through the process until the matter is resolved.

Timescales
We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. The timescales for each stage of the procedures are set out below. When this policy refers to Working Days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the school is open during term-time. Some of the procedures are therefore likely to take considerably longer during the holidays when personnel are likely to be on holiday. The dates of terms are published on the school's website. During periods of disruption to normal term time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or staff absence, there may need to be flexibility regarding timescales.

Designated Person
The Principal is responsible for investigating and resolving complaints.
Her responsibilities are to –

- be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved
- keep records of each complaint and how matters proceed (including noting at which stage each complaint is resolved)
- co-ordinate the complaints procedure across the school
- arrange additional assistance for parents when required, for example because of a disability
- work with the Assistant Principals to maintain an on-going training programme for all school staff regarding the complaints procedures and this policy
- monitor the level and type of complaints as well as the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints, reporting regularly to the Chair of the Governing Body with respect to complaints
- The School's Data Protection Lead (DPL) is the designated contact for complaints relating to the processing, use, disclosure, retention, accuracy or security of personal data.
- Where appropriate, the Principal may delegate the investigation of a data protection complaint to the Data Protection Lead or another suitably qualified person who has not been directly involved in the matter.

Stage 1: Informal concerns and difficulties

We expect that most complaints or difficulties, where a parent or pupil seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error.

Notification: Please raise the complaint initially as follows –

- Education issues - if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the Class/Subject Teacher

- Pastoral care - for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom please speak or write to the appropriate Assistant Principal

- Disciplinary matters - a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with the appropriate Assistant Principal.

- Financial matters - a query relating to fees or extras should be stated in writing to the Business Manager, in the first instance.
- Complaints relating to personal data should be directed to the Business Manager, who is the School's Data Protection Lead. Such complaints may be made in writing, electronically, by telephone or in person. Where a complaint is made verbally, the School will maintain a written record.

We will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within three working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing.

Unresolved complaint: A complaint which has not been resolved by informal means within 12 Working Days should be notified in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

Notification: An unresolved complaint under Stage 1, a complaint which requires investigation, dissatisfaction with some aspect of the school's policies or procedures should be made in writing with full details and sent to the Principal with all relevant documents and your full contact details.

Acknowledgement: Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, fax, email or letter within three Working Days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale. In most cases, the Principal will speak to and/or meet with the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Principal may ask a member of EDT staff to act as investigator.

Investigation: The Investigator may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you and others involved personally. The outcome of the investigation will be recorded in writing and given to the Principal who will then notify you by telephone, fax, email or letter of the findings and the reasons for it. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint, including a written record of the Principal's findings.

Timeframe: The Principal will aim to inform you of the outcome of any investigation and the findings and reasoning within 20 Working Days from the receipt of the complaint.

Stage 3: Reference to the Complaints Panel

Overview: A Complaints Panel Hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Principal. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint, which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

Notification: If you are not satisfied with the Principal's findings under Stage 2, you may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Complaints Panel by writing to Nicky Coyle, Business Manager, St. Andrew's School, 24-28 Watts Avenue, Rochester, Kent ME1 1SA within Five Working Days of receiving the Principal's findings. Your request will usually only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1 and 2. Please ensure that you

include a copy of all relevant documents and your full contact details with your letter. Please also include a list of all documents you believe to be in the School's possession which you believe to be relevant to your complaint and you wish the Panel to see. If you require assistance with your request, because of, for example, a disability, please include details of this in your letter and appropriate arrangements will be made.

Acknowledgement: Nicky Coyle, Business Manager, will acknowledge your complaint in writing within two Working Days of receipt

Convening the Panel: The Business Manager will convene the Panel as soon as reasonably practicable and within 15 days of the request for a panel hearing but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. The Panel will consist normally of a minimum of three individuals who are not directly involved with the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an independent member, not involved with Education Development Trust or their schools.

Notice of hearing: Within 15 working days of the Panel convening, the Business Manager will send you written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will hear it.

Attendance: You will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Business Manager at least three clear days prior to the hearing.

Chairman: The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves).

Hearing: All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Business Manager (or a person nominated by the Business Manager) will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings in any event.

Evidence: The Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

Conduct: All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.

Adjournment: The Chairman may at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.

Decision: After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel shall reach a decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel's decision may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you within seven working days. Reasons for the decision will be given. The decision may include findings and recommendations and will be sent to you, the Chairman of the GB, the Principal, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made and is available for inspection on the School premises by the Proprietor and the Principal.

Private proceeding: A hearing before the Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

Confidentiality
Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be 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.

Education Development Trust (EDT)
The School will ensure that EDT are informed of any complaints at Stage 2 without delay and will ensure that EDT are kept informed as to all stages of the complaint thereafter.

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

Records
A written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure. The School will record whether they are resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be available from a member of staff in the School Office and is noted at the end of this policy.

The record of EYFS complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI (as the school inspectorate) on request.

Records of complaints will be kept for seven years.

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied following completion of the School's complaints procedure in relation to a data protection matter, they may raise their concerns with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Further information regarding the ICO and how to make a complaint can be found on the ICO website at www.ico.org.uk.

Fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements

If you believe that St. Andrew's School are not meeting the EYFS requirements you are able to contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666, email them on enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or you can write to them at: Applications, Regulatory and Contact (ARC) Team, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

Parents of EYFS pupils can also contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate on 0207 600 0100, email them on concerns@isi.net or you can write to them at: Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

St. Andrew's will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation
This policy is reviewed at least annually by the Principal and Education Development Trust (EDT). A summary of complaints received will be included in the Principal's regular report sheet for the Head of UKIS at the Education Development Trust with advice on any implications for policy.

The Head of UKIS at EDT will provide challenge and guidance during the regular 1-1 meetings. EDT will audit activities throughout the year and subsequently prepares a short report for trustees.

As Proprietor, Education Development Trust will act as a point of escalation for any related issues.

During the academic year 2025-2026. The school received 1 formal complaint of which 0 went to a panel hearing.

Mrs E. Steinmann-Gilbert
Principal
St. Andrew's School

Policy Date: 1st September 2026
Review Date: September 2027