



St Christopher's School and Nursery

Complaints Procedure

(including the EYFS, Before and After School Care)

St Christopher's School has always prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. St Christopher's makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website. The School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective 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. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will also be made available. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, St Christopher's will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. It does not cover exclusions, unless the School indicates otherwise (please refer to the Exclusion Policy).

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of the policy. "Parents(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about who the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

All complaints are handled by the School professionally and no child will ever be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

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 normally contact their child's class teacher or lead nursery teacher. If the class/nursery teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Headteacher.
- Complaints made directly to the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant class/nursery teacher, unless the Headteacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The class/nursery teacher or Headteacher, if the latter is the first point of contact, 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 five school days, or in the event that the class/nursery teacher and the parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should put their complaint in writing directly to the Chair of Governors, whose contact details are available on the School website.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should then put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. Parents are encouraged to complete the appended Complaint Form to proceed to Stage 2. The Headteacher may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases the Headteacher (or their nominee) will speak to and/or meet with the parent(s) concerned, normally within 5 school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- **Written records** will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will also give reasons for the decision. In most cases, the Headteacher will make the decision and provide the parents with reasons within 20 school days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headteacher (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headteacher.
- 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 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the school's Board of Governors within five days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the clerk to the Panel in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.
- The Clerk to the Board of Governors, who has been appointed by Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
- 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 Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel, the Clerk to the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within 20 school days.
- 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parent(s) may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they 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.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Headteacher.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 20 school days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 20 school days**.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **school days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

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 will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Recording Complaints and use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Any completed Complaint Form
- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

The number of formal complaints for the preceding academic year is available by request from the School Office.

Fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Requirements

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

St Christopher's School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and retained for three years from the date of resolution.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

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

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

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

Adopted by the Governing Body

Signed ***D Roberts***
Mr D Roberts
Chair of Governors

Signed ***B Grehan***
Mrs B Grehan
Headteacher

Updated June 2024
Previous review December 2022
Next review June 2026



St Christopher's School & Nursery

Complaint Form

Please read the School's Complaints Procedure before completing this form. It provides information on when and how this form should be completed.

To be completed by those with parental responsibility for a pupil and returned to the Headteacher

If your concern is specifically about the Headteacher, please complete and return to The Chair of Governors, St Christopher's School, 6 Downs Road, Epsom, KT18 5HE. Please mark Private and Confidential.

Your Details	
Your Name(s)	
Pupil's Name and Year Group	
Relationship to Pupil	
Contact Address	
Email address	
Daytime contact number	
Mobile number	

What is your complaint about? Indicate (x) for those that apply			
Health & Safety		SEN/D	
Curriculum		School Meals	
Exclusion		School uniform	
Behaviour		Communication	
Staff		Other (please state)	
Please provide details of the nature of your complaint			
Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered			
The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you			
What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?			

Signature(s):	
Name	
Date	

School use	
Stage in the complaint's procedure (circle as appropriate): 1 2 3	
Date acknowledgement sent:	By whom: