



St Leonards Complaints Policy

St Leonards School is committed to providing the best quality education and pastoral care possible for all its young people. Although formal complaints are uncommon as issues, worries or concerns can be resolved without the need for formal procedures, the School has a formal Complaints Policy. The policy includes Informal Resolution, Formal Resolution and an Appeals Procedure. By continuing to strengthen positive relationships between young people, parents or legal guardians and the School, we aim to resolve most matters raised under the Complaints Policy at the first stage. Pupils who have concerns or complaints about their treatment at St Leonards are asked to speak to their Head of Year in the first instance, as in the Stage 1 process described below. Should the pupil remain unsatisfied with the resolution, they can choose to pursue this further with their parents or legal guardians and the process can then begin again with their involvement under Stage 1.

The School will always take the opportunity to identify and implement any lessons from a complaint* and its outcome. This is why the School will record** the complaints, their outcomes and the implementation of any actions which are identified. The Policy distinguishes between different categories of complaint.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

If parents or legal guardians wish to raise an issue the first point of contact is their child's Head of Year, who may in turn consult other relevant members of staff, as appropriate, to assist with a resolution. Where issues are raised directly to another member of staff, they will refer the parents or legal guardians to the Head Of Year. The Head Of Year and, where relevant, other appropriate staff members, will speak to or meet the parents or legal guardians as soon as possible after the issue or complaint has been received. The aim will be to address the complaint within seven working days of it being received. If a complaint is made regarding a named member of staff then the matter will be referred by the Head Of Year to the Senior Deputy Head. Depending on the nature of that complaint, the Senior Deputy Head will in turn refer the matter to the appropriate member of the Leadership Team e.g. Deputy Head - Boarding, Wellbeing, Academic, D.F.O. If a safeguarding complaint is made, this must be reported directly to the Head.

If the complaint is about the Head Of Year or the relevant member of the Leadership Team, the complaint should be addressed to the Senior Deputy Head. It may be necessary, in all cases of a complaint, to invoke procedures from the School's other policies in order for a full investigation to be carried out. If, after a meeting or discussion to resolve the

complaint, there is no satisfactory resolution, parents or legal guardians can then proceed to “Stage 2: Formal Resolution” of the Complaints Policy.

If the complaint relates to the Senior Deputy, this should be directed to the Head. If the complaint is about the Head, the complaint should be sent to The Clerk to the Council, who will liaise with the Chair of Council, the parents or legal guardians and, as appropriate, the Head. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, the complaint will be considered under the “Stage 4: Appeals Procedure”, which will only apply to complaints relating to the Head.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis under Stage 1, parents or legal guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Senior Deputy Head, who in turn will ensure the relevant member of the Leadership Team (e.g. the Deputy Heads or the D.F.O.) handles the complaint. The Senior Deputy Head will aim to acknowledge the complaint within 48 hours of its receipt.

The relevant Deputy Head will hold a meeting with the parents or legal guardians concerned to discuss the matter. This meeting will usually take place within seven working days of the written complaint being received. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the complaint is against a named member of staff, the relevant Deputy Head may decide that the member of staff should be in attendance at the meeting.

The parents or legal guardians making the complaint will be consulted on this and their views taken into account in the Deputy Head’s decision. If the member of staff is to be present at the meeting, the particulars of the complaint that has been made shall be supplied to that member of staff in advance of the meeting.

Depending on the nature of the complaint against the named member of staff, it may be necessary to invoke procedures from the School’s other policies in order for a full investigation to be carried out. If this is the case, the named member of staff would not be in attendance at the meeting.

If the matter cannot be resolved at the meeting, the Deputy Head will investigate the matter further. The aim will be to provide a written response to the complaint within a further seven working days from the date of the meeting. This timescale is subject to any additional time required or allowed by other relevant policies in the case of complaint against a named member of staff. The response will explain the decision, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed and will be sent to the interested parties.

Where other relevant policies have been invoked, a decision will not contain sensitive or confidential employment details. If parents or legal guardians are dissatisfied with the decision, they may proceed to ‘Stage 3: Resolution by the Head’.

Stage 3: Resolution by the Head

At this stage of the procedure the complaint will be referred to the Head whose decision, except in the case of expulsion or permanent removal, shall be final.

Stage 4: Appeals Procedure

At this stage of the procedure, parents or legal guardians will be referred to the Clerk to the Council, who has been appointed by the Council to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel, typically comprising three Members of Council, none of whom will have had any prior involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint, will hear the appeal.

Parents or legal guardians who wish to appeal a decision of the Head to expel or permanently remove a pupil may do so within 14 days, or an agreed longer period such as the Members of Council, at their discretion, may permit, following the decision of the Head to expel or permanently remove a pupil. The Clerk to the Council will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 working days of receipt and will schedule a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

The hearing of the Complaints Panel will take place no later than 28 working days from the complaint being received by the Clerk. The Complaints Panel may require that all details of the complaint should be supplied to the parties to the hearing in advance, in which case this will be done no later than 7 days prior to the hearing. The parents or legal guardians and the Head may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate at such a hearing but may be permitted at the discretion of the Panel.

If possible, the Panel will make a decision on the complaint immediately following the hearing without the need for further investigation.

If the Panel decides that further investigation is required, this will be intimated to the parties. The steps to be taken and the proposed timescale for completion of the investigation will be outlined.

On completion of its further investigation, the Complaints Panel will meet again within seven working days. If the Panel decides a further hearing of the Panel, with the interested parties present, is necessary, the Clerk will arrange this and intimate the details to the relevant parties.

The Complaints Panel will issue its decision in writing. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

The Complaint Panel's decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations it makes, will be sent to the parents or legal guardians, the Head, the Chair of Council and, where relevant, the person who was the subject of the complaint.

Notes

***Complaint** - for the purposes of this policy is any matter relating to the School about which parents or legal guardians are unhappy and seek action by the School. Any references to the Senior Deputy Head in the foregoing Complaints Policy shall in turn be allocated to the relevant Deputy Head, dependent on the nature of the complaint;

(A) Academic matters or conduct of a teacher-Deputy Head (Academic);

(B) Pastoral matters or conduct of pastoral staff-Deputy Head (Wellbeing);

(C) Boarding matters or conduct of boarding staff-Deputy Head (Boarding);

(D) School operational matters or conduct of operational staff - Director of Finance and Operations (D.F.O.);

(E) Deputy Head/COO conduct or anything other than is covered in paragraphs (A), (B), (C), or (D) - Senior Deputy Head;

****Recording of complaints and outcomes:** a record of the complaint made, the outcome and the implementation of any recommendations will be kept by the Deputy Head (Wellbeing). Any sensitive personal information and details relating to the complaint will be kept only for so long as is required by law and in accordance with the School's privacy policy.

Monitoring and Complaints

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis to evaluate its effectiveness and eliminate unlawful discrimination. Anyone who feels that the School has breached this policy should appeal in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy.