



St Leonards

St Andrews

St Leonards Complaints Policy

Policy owned by:	Date last reviewed:	Date of next review:
Head of Junior School	August 2026	August 2027

St Leonards Complaints Policy & Procedures

St Leonards is committed to providing the best quality education and pastoral care possible. Although formal complaints are uncommon—as most concerns can be resolved quickly through open communication—the School maintains a robust, transparent Complaints Policy.

The policy follows a clear four-stage progression:

1. **Stage 1:** Informal Resolution
2. **Stage 2:** Formal Resolution
3. **Stage 3:** Resolution by the Head
4. **Stage 4:** Appeals Procedure (Complaints Panel)

By strengthening positive relationships between young people, parents/guardians, and the School, we aim to resolve the vast majority of matters at Stage 1.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to parents, legal guardians, pupils, and members of the public seeking resolution of a concern regarding St Leonards. Internal staff concerns and whistleblowing are governed by a separate procedure (*St Leonards Whistleblowing Policy*).

Definition of "Working Days" & Holiday Timelines

- **Term-Time:** "Working days" refer to days on which the School is open for normal academic instruction (Monday to Friday, excluding published bank holidays and half-term breaks).
- **School Holidays:** If a complaint is received during or immediately prior to a school holiday, the timeframe will commence on the first working day of the following term, unless the complaint involves an urgent safeguarding or child safety matter. In such cases, the Head (or Chair of Board) will designate an Executive Lead to handle the matter within an agreed extended timeline, communicated in writing within 5 calendar days of receipt.

Care & Boarding Provision (Scottish Regulatory Framework)

For our registered care services—**Boarding**—this policy complies with relevant Scottish legislation and guidance, including:

- The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010
- The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210)
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS): *My support, my life*

Specifically, this policy aligns with the following HSCS standards:

- **Standard 2 (I am safe):** Ensuring concerns are addressed promptly to maintain a secure environment.
- **Standard 4 (I am listened to and my comments and concerns are acted on):** Providing clear avenues for feedback and ensuring complaints lead to direct action.
- **Standard 3 (I have confidence in the people who support me and care for me):** Promoting transparency and accountability across all care settings.

Routing Specific Types of Concerns

To ensure matters are handled by the correct authority, the following specific routing rules apply across all stages of this policy:

- **Concerns Regarding Other Pupils, Peer Behaviour, or Bullying:** If a concern involves another pupil, peer relationships, or behavioural issues, the first point of contact is the child's Class Teacher (Junior School) or Tutor / Head of Year (Senior School). They hold primary pastoral responsibility and will investigate sensitive peer matters directly.
- **Complaints About Staff Members:** If a concern relates to a named staff member, the matter will be allocated to the appropriate Executive Lead:
 - *Academic matters or teacher conduct:* Deputy Head (Academic)
 - *Pastoral matters or pastoral staff conduct:* Deputy Head (Pastoral)
 - *Boarding matters or boarding staff conduct:* Head of Boarding
 - *School operational/ support staff conduct:* Director of Finance and Operations (D.F.O.)
- **Complaints About SMT Members:** Concerns regarding a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) should be directed to the Senior Deputy Head (Senior School) or Head of Junior School.
- **Complaints About Executive Team Members:** Concerns regarding a member of the Executive Team (including the Senior Deputy Head, Head of Junior School, or D.F.O.) must be sent directly to the Head.
- **Complaints About the Head:** Must be submitted in writing to the Clerk to the Board, who will liaise with the Chair of Board.
- **Safeguarding Concerns:** Any safeguarding complaint must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Head.
- **Children & Young People's Concerns:** Pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any trusted adult in the school. Concerns will be handled sensitively with support provided where needed. In line with **Article 12 of the UNCRC**, whenever a complaint directly impacts a child, their views will be sought and considered in an age-appropriate manner.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Parental & Public Concerns: If parents, guardians, or members of the public wish to raise an issue, the first point of contact is the child's Tutor (Senior School) or Class Teacher (Junior School). Members of the public who wish to raise a concern should direct it to the Main School Office.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Most issues, worries, or concerns can be resolved quickly and informally through direct, open communication.

- **Parental Concerns:** If parents or guardians wish to raise an issue regarding their child, the first point of contact must always be the child's Class Teacher (Junior School) or Tutor (Senior School). They will listen to the concern and consult other relevant colleagues where helpful to achieve an informal resolution.
- **Misdirected Concerns:** To ensure issues are addressed at the most appropriate informal level, if a parent raises a concern directly with another member of staff or a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), they will routinely be referred back to their child's Class Teacher or Tutor in the first instance.
- **SMT Involvement & Timeframe:** SMT will only step in at Stage 1 if the Class Teacher or Tutor identifies that senior input is strictly necessary to resolve the matter, or if the concern is about the teacher/tutor themselves. In all cases, the aim is to address the informal concern within **7 working days** of receipt.
- **Public Concerns:** Members of the public who wish to raise a concern should direct it to the Main School Office, which will route the matter to the appropriate manager for informal resolution within 7 working days.

If an issue cannot be resolved informally within 7 working days, complainants may proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If a complaint is not resolved under Stage 1, the complainant may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Senior Deputy Head or Head of Junior School within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 1 informal outcome.

1. **Acknowledgement:** The Senior Deputy Head/Head of Junior School will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within **48 hours** (working days).
2. **Formal Investigation & Meeting:** The designated member of the Executive Team will investigate the complaint. As part of this investigation, they will hold a meeting with the complainant to discuss the matter, usually within **7 working days** of receipt.
3. **Staff Attendance & Employment Policies:**
 - If the complaint concerns a named staff member, that individual may be invited to attend the meeting. Complainants will be consulted beforehand. Particulars of the complaint will be shared with the staff member in advance.

- If employment or disciplinary procedures are invoked under other school policies, the named staff member will not attend the meeting, and employment-sensitive details will remain confidential.
- 4. **Written Decision:** The Executive Lead will provide a full written response explaining the investigation findings, the decision, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed within **7 working days** of the meeting.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 decision, they may proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Resolution by the Head

If the complainant wishes to escalate a decision from Stage 2, they must write to the Head within **5 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 written response.

1. **Acknowledgement:** The Head will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within **48 hours** (working days).
2. **Review Process:** The Head will review all documentation from Stages 1 and 2 and may conduct further investigations or invite the complainant to a formal review meeting within **7 working days**.
3. **Written Determination:** The Head will issue a final written decision explaining their findings within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 3 appeal (or within 5 working days of the review meeting).

Finality of Stage 3: For all standard operational, academic, and pastoral complaints, **the decision of the Head at Stage 3 is final**. Stage 4 is strictly reserved for appeals against expulsion/permanent removal or direct complaints against the Head.

Stage 4: Appeals Procedure (Complaints Panel)

Stage 4 applies exclusively to:

- Appeals against a decision by the Head to expel or permanently remove a pupil.
- Formal complaints directly concerning the conduct or decisions of the Head.

Procedure:

1. **Filing an Appeal:** Parents/guardians must submit a written request to the Clerk to the Board within **14 calendar days** of receiving the Head's decision.
2. **Acknowledgement:** The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within **5 working days** and convene the Complaints Panel.
3. **Panel Composition:** The Panel will consist of three Members of Board who have had no prior involvement in the matter.

4. **Hearing Timeline:** The hearing will take place no later than **28 working days** after the appeal is received by the Clerk.
5. **Documentation & Representation:** All relevant documentation will be shared with all parties at least **7 working days** prior to the hearing. The parents/guardians and the Head may each be accompanied by one advisor/companion. Legal representation is not standard; however, if the School opts to be accompanied by legal or HR counsel, the complainant will automatically be granted equal rights to legal representation.
6. **Decision:**
 - The Panel may issue a decision immediately following the hearing or determine that further investigation is required.
 - If further investigation is needed, parties will be informed of the timeline. The Panel will reconvene within **7 working days** of completing the investigation.
 - The Complaints Panel's written decision, reasons, and recommendations will be sent to the parents, the Head, the Chair of Board, and (where relevant) the subject of the complaint. **The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.**

External Regulatory Contact (Care Inspectorate)

For complaints concerning registered care services (**Boarding and Kindergarten**), parents, guardians, and pupils have the **legal right to contact the Care Inspectorate at any time** during or after the internal school complaints process. You are not required to exhaust the School's internal complaints procedures first.

- **Address:** Care Inspectorate, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee, DD1 4NY
- **Telephone:** 0345 600 9527
- **Email:** concerns@careinspectorate.gov.scot
- **Website:** www.careinspectorate.com

Record-Keeping & Central Register

- **Central Complaints Register:** To prevent conflicts of interest, a central, secure record of all formal complaints (Stage 2 and above), their outcomes, and any implementation recommendations is maintained in a restricted Executive Register managed by the Office of the Head.
- **Data Retention:** Personal data relating to complaints will be retained strictly in accordance with statutory requirements and the School's Privacy Policy.
- **Policy Monitoring:** This policy is reviewed annually by the Executive Team and Board of Governors to evaluate its effectiveness, ensure continuous organisational learning, and eliminate unlawful discrimination.