



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Last review date: July 2023

Latest review date: July 2024

Staff responsible: Henry Marshall (Head) and Mark Taylor (Chair of Governors)

Chair of Governors: Mark Taylor

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following St Michael's policies:

- *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*
- *Health and Safety Policy*

Rights Respecting School policy statement

Our school's vision and values have at their heart the importance of treating each other as we would want to be treated ourselves, with Care, Consideration and Courtesy for all. This is one of the reasons why the work of UNICEF and Rights Respecting Schools is so significant to us. We are committed to respecting, upholding and promoting the rights of every child.

This policy links specifically to our commitment to the the following articles:

- *Article 2 - No discrimination*
- *Article 3 - Best interest of the child*
- *Article 4 - Making rights real*

This procedure is made available to current parents via the Parent Portal and prospective parents via the school website. It is also available on request from the school office. This procedure is only available to be used by parents of current pupils.

St Michael's has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint in respect of these areas they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution 10 working days

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's / daughter's Form Teacher. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him / her to consult the Head of Department (in the case of Pre-Prep and Juniors) or one of the Assistant Heads (in the case of the Senior school).
3. The Form Teacher 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 10 days,



or in the event that the Form Teacher, Head of Department or Assistant Heads and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

4. If the complaint is in respect of the Form Teacher the parents should contact the Head of Department or Assistant Heads. Then the above procedure will be followed.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide the appropriate course of action.
2. In most cases the Head will meet the parents concerned, normally within 3 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews (and correspondence) held in relation to the complaint.
5. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing normally within 10 working days from the Stage 2 discussion with parents. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
6. If the complaint is against the Head then the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors or if the Chair is involved, to the Deputy Chair. Contact details for the Governors are available on the School website.
7. The Chair or the Deputy Chair will then decide the appropriate course of action and follow the above procedure.
8. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should submit a written request to the Bursar who will refer the matter to the Complaints Panel (the Panel) for consideration. The Bursar will appoint a Convenor who shall be a Governor. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and shall be appointed by the Convenor. Each of the Panel members shall be a school Governor or approved by the Governors. The Panel must be impartial and independent.
2. The Convenor, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days. The term working days refers to term dates. If a complaint is made



during a holiday period then the convenor will notify the parties of a timetable which will seek to deal with the matter as expeditiously as possible whilst acknowledging that absences may have an impact. The hearing may or may not include the person/s directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

3. 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.
4. The parents may attend and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate for an internal procedure. It is important that the hearing is conducted in an informal non adversarial manner. At all times parties should be treated with respect and courtesy. Particular care must be taken if a child is present during the hearing and the child's best interests must be paramount on any decision taken concerning attendance.
5. The Panel will decide how to conduct the hearing.
6. If possible, the panel will resolve the parents complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
7. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. This may include the attendance and examination of witnesses. Any further written submissions will be at the sole discretion of the Panel.
8. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision which may dismiss the complaint in whole or in part, may uphold the complaint in whole or in part and may make recommendations which it shall complete within 10 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.
9. The decision of the Panel will be final.
10. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the subject of the investigation.

- i) A copy of the panel's findings and any recommendations will be kept on the school premises for inspection by Governors and the Head.
- ii) Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other local legal obligation prevails.
- iii) The school will keep records of all complaints and actions taken regardless of whether the complaint was upheld. These will be held in accordance with the school's policies on Data Protection and Privacy.

Unreasonable Complaints

While all complaints will be dealt with fairly and impartially there is a threshold where complaints against a staff member become unacceptable and take on a threatening, abusive or offensive nature. If a complaint falls into this category then the first step will be for a



meeting to be arranged by the school with the Head and/or the Chair of Governors to explain why the threshold has been breached and to discuss a plan to avoid further escalation. The school reserves its rights should the complainant persist in the unacceptable approach subsequent to that meeting.