

POLICY STATEMENT

Policy	Complaints Policy
Date Written	20 th April 2017 (Reviewed 24 th October 2018)
Written by	A Cabezas Hayes (Reviewed by J Blake)
Approved by	G Sutton
Next major review date	18 th April 2019
Location and disseminations	A copy of the policy can be found, in the college admin office and on the college website.

The policy provides guidance for how the college handles concerns and complaints, taking into account paragraph 25 of schedule 1 to education (Independent School Standards) (England) regulations 2010 (SI 2010/1997). The policy applies to all sections of the college.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed efficiently, sympathetically and appropriately. We will try to resolve every concern in a positive way with the aim of putting right any wrongs and reviewing our procedures if appropriate. It is important that any matters of dissatisfaction are raised with us as soon as possible as we recognise that a matter which is not resolved quickly can soon become a larger issue and damage the relationship. Parents, agents or students should never feel that a complaint will cause detriment or hinder opportunities at the college.

Child protection issues or student expulsions follow separate procedures.

Complaints processed under this policy follow three staff procedure.

Stage one: Informal raising of a concern or difficulty in writing to a member of staff.

Stage Two: A formal complaint in writing to a member of the college management team or the director.

Stage three: A reference to a complaints panel.

Timescale

We aim to resolve any complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible and within two months.

Complaints outside of this policy

There may be some complaints which would be deemed to fall outside the scope of this policy. Such complaints could include:

- Complaints which are substantially a repeat of a previous complaint which has been

dealt with.

- Complaints which refer to event more than three calendar months ago.
- The complaint is frivolous.
- The complaint refers to a matter which the college has not authority over.
- The complaint relates to: Safeguarding, Freedom of Information, National Curriculum, Exclusions, Admissions, Allegations of Abuse, Serious financial or criminal concerns, SEN or services provide by other organisations at the college site.

Stage 1

Most worries and complaints can often be dealt with at an early stage, by Teachers or House Staff. At this stage, there is no formal complaint, but a concern or worry has been raised which needs to be addressed.

Where communications is made by telephone or email staff will make a response with in 48 hours. If a fuller response is required, this will be made within 5 working days. Concerns made in writing will receive an initial response within 2 working days of receipt.

Parents and Students are advised that the first person to inform will probably be your son or daughter's Housemaster or Teacher.

Stage 2 – The Formal Complaint to the Director of Studies

This is made in writing. The Director of Studies undertakes to acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 48 hours of receiving it. They will then investigate the complaint and normally report back within 14 working days (excluding college holidays) from receipt of the complaint.

If the complaint is received within 24 hours of or during a school holiday they will report back within 14 working days of the start of the new term. The Director of Studies will make it clear in their letter to the complainant how they are entitled to appeal to the College Director/Proprietor should they be dissatisfied either with the Director of Studies' decision or their explanation. A log of formal complaints is kept by the college administrator.

Stage 3 – The Appeal to the College Director/ Proprietor

Parents who are dissatisfied with the Director of Studies' decision, or who have a serious complaint about the Director of Studies should write to the College Director/Proprietor, Giles Sutton, at his email address success@buckswood.co.uk within 14 days of receipt of the decision letter from the Director of Studies. He will set up a Complaints Panel as outlined in the procedure below:

Complaints Panel

Should a parent decide to appeal against a decision by the Director of Studies, a Panel consisting of two members of the Management Team and a member independent of the management and running of the college, appointed by the College Director/Proprietor. They

will provide a fair and impartial judgement, having equal responsibility for the interests of pupils, staff and the college. The Panel should consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The College Director/Proprietor will appoint one of the members of the Panel to chair it. The Panel meeting will take place at the college premises on a date to be arranged with the parents, normally within 20 working days (excluding school holidays) of receipt by the college of the written request for an appeal. It is a private procedure and all those who are concerned in it are required to keep its proceedings confidential, subject to any overriding legal objections.

Attendance

Those present at the Panel Meeting will be:

- Members of the Panel and the college administrator to take notes.
- The Director of Studies and any other relevant member of staff whom they, or the parents have asked, should attend, along with anyone else whom the Director of Studies feels is needed in order to secure a fair outcome.
- The parents and, exceptionally, the pupil. The parents may be accompanied by a friend or relation, but not a legal representative, as the panel is non-adversarial in nature. Should the friend or relative be legally qualified the college should be provided with seven days' notice of this.

Procedure

- The Panel will consider each of the outstanding concerns raised by the parents so far as relevant to: What action the parents seek in order to satisfy the complaint in their eyes.
- Whether the facts of the case were sufficiently established. The civil standard of proof, namely "the balance of probability" will apply.
- Whether any further investigation is required.
- If so, by whom and by when. This will allow the Panel to review the reasonableness of the decision of the Director of Studies and either reach a finding or determine the further action required.

Conduct of the Hearing

The Panel Chairman will conduct the meeting in a manner, which is fair to all participants, having regard to any representations made to them by any participant as to the most appropriate way to determine the issues. The meeting will be held in a suitable room and in an informal manner. All statements made at the meeting will be unsworn. The proceedings will not be recorded without the consent of both the Chairman of the Panel and a parent. Any recording will be used only to assist the panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons, and will belong to the college. The secretary will be

asked to keep a hand-written minute of the main points, which arise at the meeting. All those present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes.

Everyone is expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The meeting will be directed by the Chairman of the Panel who will conduct it so as to ensure that all those present have a reasonable opportunity of asking questions and making appropriate comment, normally as follows:

- The Director of Studies and parent/pupil would be present throughout.
- The Director of Studies would outline the reasons for their recommendations, including the relevant school rules.
- Both parties would then be asked, in turn, to respond to each of the points raised in the letter to the proprietor and may be allowed to cross-question each other, in turn, at the discretion of the Chairman.
- Panel members may question either party at this stage in the proceedings.
- Other witnesses, if any, would be called in turn, questioned first by the party who called them and then by the other party and panel; they leave after their evidence is completed.
- The Director of Studies summarises her position in the light of all the evidence heard.
- The parents are given the last word to summarise their position.
- When the Chairman of the Panel decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if by then there is no consensus the meeting will be brought to a conclusion.

Decision

The decision of the Panel will be final. The decision will be recorded and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Director of Studies and the College Director/Proprietor. The decision will be notified, with reasons, to the parents by the Chairman of the Panel in person or the College Director/Proprietor by letter or email within five days of the meeting, or, if further investigation has been ordered, within 14 days.

If relevant, the person complained about will also receive a copy of the decision.

Recording and Confidentiality

A written record will be kept, on the college premises, by the Principal of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing. In addition records are kept of how complaints were resolved 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 college year will be supplied to parents on request and is found at the end of this policy.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body, conducting an inspection under sections 108 and 109 of the 2008 Education Act, requests access to them.

Recommendations

It is possible that the Panel will propose changes to organisation or procedures as a result of their deliberations. These are to be presented to the Advisory Board.

Details of how to contact ISI

The Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) can be contacted at the following address:-
CAP House 9 – 12 Long Lane LONDON EC1A 9HA Telephone 020 7600 0100 * Email info@isi.net)

The number of formal complaints received by St Georges College in Academic year 2017-18 was 0.