



Introduction

The Governors are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at the school, both in the provision of education for pupils and in every other aspect of the running of the school.

A complaint procedure is an important part of the management of a well run school allowing you the opportunity to voice any concerns you have through appropriate channels. The procedure also guides staff on how to deal with any concerns raised by parents. This procedure has been adopted by the Governing Body to ensure a systematic and fair approach to the resolution of such concerns.

Complaints relating to the curriculum should be addressed under the separate Curriculum Complaints Procedure. Similarly complaints about SEN provision should follow the SEN procedures.

Any complaints by staff should be addressed under the school's Grievance Procedure or Dignity at Work Policy.

A complaint may result in disciplinary action by the school against a member of staff, which would be confidential between that member of staff and the school, but otherwise the complainant should be kept fully informed of the handling of any complaint. Any complaint will be kept confidential unless it is necessary to involve other parties and will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

The majority of issues raised by you are concerns rather than complaints. St Julie's School is committed to taking concerns seriously at the earliest stage and it is the school's policy to resolve a complaint as fairly and speedily as possible.

For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made as soon as possible and within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than one year it will not be investigated.

St Julie's School reserves the right not to progress complaints that are determined to be vexatious or malicious.

There are four stages to the complaints procedure, as follows: -

- Stage 1 - A concern raised informally with a Class Teacher / Form Teacher /Progress Leader.

(Unless it is a complaint about the conduct of a member of staff, in which case the matter should be raised with the Line Manager)
- Stage 2 - Formal Complaint to be heard by Line Manager or Deputy Headteacher.
- Stage 3 - Complaint to be heard by Headteacher.
- Stage 4 - Complaint to be heard by Governing Body's Complaints Panel.

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Stage 1 – Raising a concern

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will be dealt with promptly. There may be no need for the complaint to be put in writing, which would formalise matters and may lead you to feel less prepared to articulate concerns.

The school requests you to make your first contact with your child's Class Teacher, Form Teacher or Progress Leader, that is unless the concern relates to the conduct of a member of staff in which case the first contact should be with their Line Manager.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation or discussion with others, in which case you will receive a response within **3 school working days** and you will be provided with a copy of the School's Complaints Procedure.

The majority of concerns will be dealt with, and satisfactorily resolved in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 1 of this procedure, you must contact the school within **10 school working days** from receipt of the response and request that the complaint is heard at Stage 2 of the procedure, giving reasons why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Line Manager or Deputy Headteacher

You may be asked to put your complaint in writing, which should be addressed to the Line Manager, or Deputy Headteacher if it is a complaint about the conduct of a member of staff. To request the name of the staff member's Line Manager please ask at Reception. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The School will normally acknowledge receipt of a complaint within **2 school working days**. This response may include information about the action taken by the school to resolve the issue.

Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within **10 school working days**, with a response being sent to you within **5 school working days** following the meeting.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 of the procedure, please write to the Headteacher within **10 working school days** of receiving your response outlining the reasons why you remain dissatisfied and what you would like the school to do to resolve the matter.

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Your complaint should be in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. The school will acknowledge receipt of your complaint at Stage 3 of the procedure normally within **2 school working days** of receiving it.

The Headteacher will arrange for a further investigation and may need to convene a meeting to discuss the matter further. This will be arranged within **10 school working days**.

The Headteacher will normally give a written response within **10 school working days** from receipt of the complaint at Stage 3, or following the conclusion of any meeting that may have taken place.

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If you remain dissatisfied with the response at Stage 3, you should contact the school within **10 school working days**.

Stage 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Panel

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, you should write to the Chair of Governors within **10 school working days** giving details of the complaint, outlining the reasons why you remain dissatisfied with the Headteacher's response and what you would like the Governors to do to resolve the matter.

The school's Governing Body/Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of your complaint at Stage 4 of the procedure normally within **2 school working days** of receiving it.

The Chair of Governors, or a nominated Governor will convene a Complaints Panel that will consist of three Governors who have not previously been involved with the complaint. The hearing will normally take place within **15 school working days** of receipt of the written complaint at Stage 4 of the Procedure, and at a date and time agreed by all parties.

Once a date has been agreed for a hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will write to you and the Headteacher giving details of the meeting, requesting copies of any documents to be put before the meeting and names of any witnesses who either party may wish to attend. The parents will be informed of the right to be accompanied by a representative/friend/family member.

The aim of the hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the School and the complainant. The procedure at the hearing needs to be appropriate for the circumstances and is at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaints Panel, but is likely to involve:

- Presentation of complaint, including any witnesses
- A reply by the Headteacher, including any witnesses
- Questions by all parties
- Representation about ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily

The full procedure for the hearing will be sent to all parties by the Clerk to the Governors.

If necessary, the panel will withdraw to consider their findings of fact on the evidence put before them and to consider their conclusions, which may include measures to redress problems identified. All parties will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within **5 school working days** after the date of the hearing. The notes of the complaints meeting are used as an aide memoire to help inform the outcome and decision letter and are not retained. The outcome letter acts as a record of the decision of the meeting and the rationale behind it.

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated.

The Governors Complaints Committee is the final stage of the school's complaints process.

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If the complainant is still not happy with the outcome following representation to the governing body the final stage is to complain directly to the Secretary of State not the LA. Complainants should be provided with the necessary details to do so if they wish. The Secretary of State can only respond to complaints if;

“a person believes that a governing body or LA is acting 'unreasonably' or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly (see sections 496 and 497 of the Education Act 1996). However, intervention can only occur if the governing body or the LA has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted unreasonably in the performance of a duty. Intervention would have to be expedient in the sense that there would have to be something that the Secretary of State could instruct either party to do to put matters right. The Secretary of State must be satisfied that a decision is unreasonable in the sense that no reasonable authority or governing body, acting with due regard to its statutory responsibilities, would have reached that decision.” (Guide to the Law for School Governors. Jan 2010)

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