



SARK SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Sark School is proud of the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. If a parent raises a concern or a complaint we want to resolve it as quickly as possible and it will be treated by the School in accordance with this Complaints Policy. Our policy refers to either an informal resolution (Stage 1) or a formal resolution (Stage 2) of complaints and/or concerns; or an Appeal Panel Hearing (Stage 3). It should be noted that in nearly every case, Sark School aims to resolve these at the informal stage.

For our purposes, we distinguish between a concern and a complaint. A concern is any query raised by a parent about the quality of our educational provision. A complaint is a specific and/or persistent dissatisfaction.

What constitutes a complaint/concern?

A complaint/concern is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint/concern is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something, that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints/concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint/concern that you (or your child) raises in good faith.

Timeframe for dealing with complaints/concerns

All complaints/concerns will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint/concern as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint/concern is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.



SARK SCHOOL

Recording complaints/concerns

Following resolution of a complaint/concern, the school will keep a written record of all complaints/concerns and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints/concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint/concern, they should contact their son/daughter's Class teacher as soon as possible. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the Class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of School.

At this stage, complaints/concerns made directly to the Head of School will usually be referred to the relevant Class teacher, unless the Head of School deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally, or unless it concerns a matter related to pupils in the Head of School's class.

The relevant Class teacher will make a written record of all complaints/concerns and the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within 7 days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint/concern in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

If, however, the complaint/concern is against the Head, parents should make their complaint/concern directly to the Chair of the Board of Education. The Chair of the Board of Education may be contacted in writing at the school address or by their email address: chair@sarkschool.co.uk



SARK SCHOOL

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If the complaint/concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then within 28 days the parents should put their complaint/concern in writing to the Head of School, who will decide, after considering the complaint/concern, the appropriate action to take.

In most cases, the Head of School will speak to the parents concerned within 7 days of receiving the complaint/concern, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head of School to carry out further investigations.

The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint/concern.

Once the Head of School is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School will give reasons for the decision.

The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of the Head of School receiving the complaint/concern. If for any reason this is not possible, the Head of School will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he/she is unable to issue his/her decision and informing the parents when he/she will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint/concern in any event.

If the complaint/concern is against the Head of School, the Chair of the Board of Education will call for a full report from the Head of School and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed, within 28 days, to Stage 3 of this procedure.



SARK SCHOOL

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Clerk to the Board of Education who has been appointed to call hearings of a Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint/concern and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Clerk to the Board of Education, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint/concern and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 days.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint/concern or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint/concern without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 days of the hearing. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well as the Chair of the Board of Education, the Director of Education and the Head of School. The decision of the Panel is final.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not consider anonymous complaints. Any anonymous complaints will be retained and used to monitor any patterns of complaints.



SARK SCHOOL

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Education Committee will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Parents can be assured that all complaints/concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the school where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Please note that parents may request the number of complaints registered in the preceding year.