



# Complaints Policy and Procedures 2021-2022

This policy is updated and approved by the Governing Body every year

This version was approved March 2022

The next review will be Sept 2022

Approved: Mrs S Driscoll – Chair of Governors

Approved: Mr N. Pledger – Headteacher

*Signed copy held in school*

## Complaints Policy & Procedures

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014. It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. This may be achieved through a meeting, telephone conversation or email exchange.

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office.

The school aims to provide an initial response to any concern or complaint within 48 hours where possible.

All time scales in this document are given as a guide only.

### Purpose

Whilst our approach to parental partnerships is designed to limit incidents of disagreement between us, we acknowledge that on occasion, parents and other stakeholders may feel the need to raise a concern with or make a formal complaint to the school.

The purpose of this procedure is therefore to ensure that any complaint against Sir Thomas Fremantle School will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way.

The aim of this is to achieve a speedy and satisfactory resolution to any complaints received.

The school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for students.

## Scope

This procedure deals with specified day-to-day concerns or complaints against individual members of staff, their action or the management and/or operation of the school and procedures therein.

This policy does not cover complaints relating to:

- Admissions
- Examinations
- Safeguarding or Child Protection matters
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Complaints about services provided by other organisations using the school's facilities or site (please contact the service provider direct).

## Procedure:

### **Concerns - where reassurance is sought in relation to a worry or doubt**

Concerns will be dealt with by the member of staff best placed to address the issue, who will undertake an investigation of the situation and communicate their findings with the person raising the concern.

Concerns may be raised with the from tutor, class teacher or directly with the Senior Leadership Team, including the Headteacher.

Concerns received by telephone will be directed to the most appropriate member of staff by the Receptionist.

In every case an initial response can be expected within 48 hours and a resolution arrived at as soon as possible.

Resolutions may include: an apology, explanation, admission that the situation could have been dealt with more effectively, an assurance that the situation will not recur or an undertaking that the school will review the procedure in light of the concern.

## **Complaints – where a formal expression of dissatisfaction is made**

### **Time scales**

A complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. School holiday periods, weekends and bank holidays are not included in the timeframes detailed in this policy.

### **Procedure for dealing with complaints**

Where issues cannot be resolved informally, they become a matter for the Senior Leadership Team or, exceptionally, for the school Governors to address.

Once the complaint has been received in writing, a record of the process of the resolution of the complaint will be kept on the Complaint Action Record (Appendix 1) which will be retained by the school.

The following stages will be applied in the handling of any complaints received:

#### **Stage 1:**

The complaint will be heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team who is neither the Headteacher nor the subject of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be referred to stage 2. The school will aim to respond within five school days.

#### **Stage 2:**

The complaint will be heard by the Headteacher and will not involve any individual in the previous stage of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be referred to stage 3. The school will aim to provide a response within ten school days.

#### **Stage 3:**

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the previous two steps, they must write to the Chair of Governors care of the school office. This communication should outline the nature of their complaint and their reasons for being unhappy with the response provided by the Headteacher. The Chair of Governors will convene a complaints panel consisting of at least three people who have not been involved in the earlier stages of the process. One member of the panel must be independent to

the management and running of the school. Subject to availability of the required panel member, the hearing will be held within ten school days of the Headteacher's stage 2 letter.

The complainant, parent and, if applicable, the subject of the complaint, may attend the meeting in order to present their case; either may be accompanied.

The possible outcomes of the complaints appeal panel are:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Decide upon appropriate action to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of similar nature do not recur.

The chair of the Governors' appeal panel will inform the complainant and the member of staff who is the subject of the complaint (where applicable), of the outcome of the complaints appeal hearing in writing either by electronic mail or otherwise within ten school days of the decision being taken. The Governors' appeal panel hearing is the final stage of the school's complaints process.

If the complaint regards the Headteacher, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted directly through school reception.

## **Records**

Written records of all complaints will be kept. This includes all documentation and a record of the stage of resolution of the complaint.

All such records will be classified and kept as 'confidential' except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Regulation (Independent Schools Standard)(England) Regulations 2011; where the disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. **All records will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and headteacher.**

A record of the number of complaints received each academic year will be available upon request in writing to the school.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor, evaluate and review this procedure. The procedure will be reviewed at least every two years.

## **Appendices:**

- Complaints Form
- Checklist

- Complaints Flow Diagram

### Appendix 1 – Concern or Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the complaints co-ordinator who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name:	
Your relationship to the student:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?	
What action do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:	
Signature:	
Date:	

<b>Official Use</b>	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Referred to:	
Date:	

## **Appendix 2 - Checklist for a Panel Hearing**

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headmaster and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale