ST HUGH'S SCHOOL PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

THIS POLICY REFERS TO ALL PUPILS INCLUDING THOSE IN BOARDING AND THE EYFS

1. Introduction

1.1 St. Hugh's School aims to provide high quality teaching and pastoral care to its pupils.

1.2 Occasionally parents of students currently at the School may wish to make a complaint and this will be dealt with by the School in accordance with the following Complaints Procedure, which forms part of the School's system for quality control. Where appropriate the outcome of a complaint may be used to facilitate improvements in the service and facilities provided to members of the school community. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is seen as a complaint, and in the scope of these procedures. All complaints at each stage will be acknowledged and dealt with according to these procedures.

1.3 These procedures apply to all current registered pupils of St. Hugh's School. These procedures do not apply to parents of prospective pupils. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

1.4 Any complaints that include allegations of possible child abuse should be made direct to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs. Natalie Wallis (Deputy Head Pastoral and Staff) or Miss Ann-Marie Hainsworth-Ferguson (Head of Early Years and Deputy DSL). Please refer to the school's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** on the website.Policies and Guidance | St. Hugh's School

1.5 This **Complaints Policy** is also available on the St. Hugh's School Website. Copies can be provided on request to anyone who would prefer to have a hard copy.

1.6 Please note that this policy does not apply to appeals against permanent exclusions for the School except that in such cases the Stage 3 procedures of this policy are adopted. For full details of the appeal process for a permanent exclusion please see the School's **Promoting Positive Behaviour**

Policy. Such an appeal panel is not a re-hearing of the matter leading to exclusion but is a review of whether the Head came to a reasonable decision based on the information available to him at the time that the exclusion was made.

1.7 **This procedure aims to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:**

a. Encourages the resolution of problems within the School community by informal means wherever possible.

b. Is easily accessible, publicised, simple to understand, impartial and non-adversarial.

c. Encourage parents to know that the School takes complaints seriously.

d. Ensures that complaints are dealt with confidentiality, quickly, fully and fairly within clearly defined limits.

e. Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary,

f. Maintains good working relationships between all members of the School community.

g. Provides information to the School's Senior Management Team so that improvements can be made.

2. Scope And Application

2.1 This policy is a whole school policy including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All complaints relating to the EYFS will be dealt with within 28 days.

2.2 This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about the actions or inaction of the School and where a parent wishes the School to take action.

2.3 This policy applies to complaints from:

a. parents of current registered pupils; Parents of past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The scope of this policy does not extend to:

b. requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or a refund of fees;

c. parents being entitled to details of any sanctions imposed on staff arising from their complaint, irrespective of the nature of the complaint and whether or not it is upheld.

3. Handling of Complaints

3.1 Parents are encouraged to raise their complaint as soon as possible so that the School can address the matter as promptly and efficiently as possible.

3.2 Whenever possible, in order to resolve issues in a timely fashion, a complaint should 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. The School will consider complaints outside of these limits if:

a. It is expected that all complaints will be managed in a timely manner by both parties.

b. In the unlikely event of a delay to the timescales for a particular stage of the complaint, the School will notify the parents of the delay advising them of revised timescales.

c. Throughout this policy, reference is made to "working Days". This means Monday to Friday during term time when the School is open and as published on the School's website. Where possible, the School will adopt a pragmatic and reasonable approach to avoid delays arising as a result of School holidays in order to minimise any adverse impact arising from such a delay.

3.3 **Complaints about the delivery of the EYFS must be completed within a 28 time period. This may mean accelerating some of the stages to ensure that this requirement is met.**

4. Stages Of Complaints

4.1 This policy comprises three stages for the handling of a complaint:

a. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution.

b. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution.

c. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing.

4.2 Details of each of these stages is set out in detail below.

4.3 Parents should refer to Appendix 1 "Unreasonable Complaints" which is based upon the Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK

5. Record Keeping And Confidentiality

5.1 The School is obliged to keep a written record of all complaints made in writing under the Stage 2 and Stage 3 of these procedures and record whether they are then resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints [regardless of whether they are upheld].

5.2 The School chooses though to also keep a record of informal complaints at Stage 1 to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

5.3 A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3.

5.4 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 section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

5.5 The School will provide upon request to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. Although knowledge of the complaint will be restricted to those who need to know about it we cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside of the School aware of a complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or if it became necessary to refer matters to the police. Parents would be fully informed.

5.6 The School will make available (on request to the School Office) the number of formal complaints received by the School in the preceding School year.

5.7 Anonymous complaints are recorded on the register of complaints.

5.8 Details of all complaints will be reported to the Governing Body indicating whether the complaint was resolved at the second or proceeded to the third stage and a panel hearing.

6. Complaints To The Independent Schools Inspectorate

6.1 This procedure also relates to complaints arising from the provision for the Early Years Foundation stage.

6.2 In all cases parents may also wish to complain to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate [concerns@isi.net] [Independent Schools' Inspectorate, CAP house, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA, 020 7600 0100]

6.3 The record of complaint will be made available to ISI on request.

7. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

7.1 It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally between the parties concerned without recourse to any of the following procedures.

7.2 The School will take all reasonable steps to resolve an informal complaint within 10 working days of notification.

7.3 If parents have any complaints they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher. Parents should make direct contact with a member of staff by writing a letter, sending email or telephoning. They should be as clear as possible about what is troubling them and their child.

7.4 In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means 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 Middle or Upper School, the Deputy Head (Pastoral and Staff) or the Deputy Head (Academic and Operations) in order to resolve the matter.

7.5 If a concern or complaint needs to be taken further and refers to a member of staff then it should be made to the Deputy Head (Academic and Operations), in respect to teaching and learning; the Deputy Head (Pastoral and Staff), for pastoral, discipline or general matters as well as for matters relating to support staff. With respect to the Pre-Prep and EYFS if the complaint refers to a member of staff then it should be made to the Head of Early Years or Head of Lower School.

7.6 If a concern or complaint needs to be taken further and refers to a member of the Senior Management Team then it should be made to the Head.

7.7 In the event of a concern or complaint about the Head:

a. Parents may wish to raise the complaint directly with the Head if they feel the matter can be resolved informally. This complaint may be made verbally or in writing, however if it is made in writing the School will not automatically treat this as a Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) complaint and the Head will try to resolve the matter informally under Stage 1.

b. The Head will acknowledge an informal complaint about him within 3 working days and will try to resolve the matter informally either through direct conversation or a meeting within 10 working days of the initial complaint.

7.8 If resolution cannot be achieved informally the parents may proceed to Stage 2 of the process.

7.9 Alternatively, parents may wish to complain about the Head by proceeding straight to Stage 2.

7.10 A written and dated record of any concern or complaint will be made by the person contacted. A copy will be lodged with the relevant Head if the matter is likely to require his/her attention. The complaint will be acknowledged.

7.11 Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days, or in the event that the school contact 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.

7.12 Although all formal complaints under Stage 2 will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

8. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

8.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents must put their complaint in writing to the Head, this letter should state that they want to deal with the matter under the Stage 2 formal procedures. The Head will delegate the investigation of the complaint to an appropriate

senior member of staff from the relevant section of the School. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint and the results of the investigation, the appropriate course of action to take.

8.2 The Head will respond to a Level 2 Complaint within 2 working days and the School will take all reasonable steps to resolve a formal complaint at stage 2 within 10 working days of notification.

8.3 The Head will meet/speak to the parents concerned. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. In some cases a senior member of staff will act for the Head.

8.4 It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. Parents will be informed of its progress and when they can expect a decision. Where the timescale is likely to be exceeded, parents will be informed when they might expect the decision to be made.

8.5 The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These will be provided to the Panel in the event of a stage 3 panel hearing being invoked.

8.6 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 within the 10 working days since notification of the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision. Where the timescale is likely to be exceeded, parents will be informed when they might expect the decision to be made.

8.7 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

8.8 In the event of a complaint about the Head:

a. The Head will forward a copy of the letter to the Chairman of Governors.

b. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the formal complaint (via the Clerk to the Governors) within 3 working days of receipt and will set out the next steps and likely timescales.

c. The parents will receive a written response to the complaint within 10 working days.

d. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the parents they can proceed to Stage 3 – Panel Hearing Stage.

9. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

9.1 **Complaints Panel Hearing**: If parents feel that their complaint has not been resolved by Stage 2, they can proceed to Stage 3 and request a Complaints Panel Hearing.

9.2 A Complaints Panel Hearing (Hearing) is a Hearing to consider those aspects of a Stage 2 complaint that have not been resolved to the satisfaction of parents. The Complaints Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints that have not already been raised.

9.3 **Requesting a Panel Hearing:** A request for a Hearing must be made in writing to the Clerk of Governors. Such a request will only be considered if Stage 2 has been completed and, if this is the case, the request will be acknowledged within 3 working days of the Stage 2 decision letter.

9.4 The request for the Hearing should clearly set out the following:

a. Details of all the grounds for complaint and how parents wish the matter to be resolved.

b. A copy of all relevant documentation and contact details.

c. Reference to details/documents held by the School that parents wish the Panel to consider.

d. Whether the parent wishes to be accompanied by a person who is legally qualified.

9.5 The Clerk will acknowledge the request for a Hearing within 3 working days of receipt of the request.

9.6 All reasonable efforts will be made to enable a Hearing to take place within 15 working days of receipt of the request. The only exception to this is that all complaints about the delivery of the EYFS must be completed within a 28 day timescale.

9.7 Parents may withdraw their request for a Hearing at any stage up to the date of the Hearing.

9.8 **Planning the Hearing:** In planning for the Hearing, the Clerk will notify all parties and panel members of the date, time and venue of the Hearing at least 10 working days before the Hearing date.

9.9 Parents must submit any documents to be considered by the Panel (which are in addition to those already referred to in section 1.2above) at least 7 working days before the Hearing.

9.10 All relevant documents will be issued by the Clerk to all parties within 5 working days of the Hearing.

9.11 Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Since the Hearing is an internal process, legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Should the parent wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they should have already notified the Clerk to Governors as per section 1.2.4 above. The Panel will wish to address parents directly and the legally qualified person may not act as an advocate or address the Panel unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.

9.12 The Clerk will normally attend the Hearing to take notes.

9.13 **Composition of the Panel:** The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and

running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Panel members will appoint one of them to act as Chair of the Hearing.

9.14 **The Hearing:** For compliance purposes, the Hearing should proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

9.15 During the Hearing, each party will have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. There is no obligation on the Panel to hear oral evidence from witnesses or consider written statements, but it may do so at its discretion.

9.16 All parties are entitled to take notes during the course of the Hearing, however it is important to point out that the Hearing is a private procedure and therefore no notes or other records of the Hearing are to be disclosed to the media or published on social media.

9.17 All those present at the Hearing must show courtesy, good manners and restraint. Where the behaviour of an attendee is inappropriate, the Chair of the Panel may at his/her discretion and after due warning either adjourn or terminate the Hearing.

9.18 The Chair of the Panel may also adjourn the Hearing if he/she feels it is appropriate to do so, for example if either party feels that specific legal advice should be sought.

9.19 When the Chair of the Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documents submitted and to the oral representations of all parties, he/she will conclude the Hearing.

9.20 **The Decision of the Panel:** The Panel will make decisions on each element of the complaint and make recommendations to the School where appropriate.

9.21 The Panel has no power to make financial awards to parents.

9.22 The Panel has no power to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents but may make recommendations as appropriate.

9.23 The Panel's decision and recommendations will be issued in writing within 7 working days of the Hearing to the parents.

9.24 The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the Head, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained against.

9.25 The decision of the Panel will be final.

9.26 A copy of the findings and recommendations is available for consultation by the governors and Head of the School on the School premises.

9.27 The Governors receive a report of the outcome of each complaint referred to the Panel and monitor the effectiveness of the procedure and the progress of any recommendations arising from the complaint as part of the School's quality assurance procedures.

10. Contact Details

10.1 **Head: Mr Jeremy Wyld**

Telephone: 01526 352169

Head@st-hughs.lincs.sch.uk

10.2 **Chair of Governors: Mr Ian Tyler**

Telephone: 01526 352169

ityler@st-hughs.lincs.sch.uk

One formal complaint requiring resolution at Stage 2 was registered under the formal procedure during the academic year 2025-26

Appendix 1 – Unreasonable Complaints

The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our School. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process whilst still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the School's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the School that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School.

Author	Head	**ISI Doc Code**	A14/E7
Reviewer	SLT	**Date of Last Review**	Autumn 2026
Authorised by	Head / FGB	**Date of Authorisation**	
Applicable to	Whole School (inc EYFS)	**Date of Next Review**	Autumn 2026 at Ac and P / Full Board

Annex A

Communications format for Stage 3 Decision

1. Set out context for decision:
    1. Note that this is a response to a Stage 3 complaint under the School's Complaints Procedure;
    2. Set out composition of Panel (including independent member);
    3. Give a brief summary of the subject matter of the complaint;
    4. Set out the chronology of the complaint, as relevant:
        1. dates of Stage 1/informal complaint;
        2. dates of Stage 2/formal complaint;
        3. date on which Stage 3 complaint was submitted;
    5. Give details of any further investigation carried out/requested by the Panel after the Stage 3 complaint was submitted;
    6. Set out the date of the Stage 3 Panel hearing and a list of attendees and roles (noting whether they were present for all or part of the hearing), including the parents' companion if applicable;
    7. Note that a bundle of papers was circulated before the hearing, and set out details of any further papers considered;
    8. Give details of the notes of the Stage 3 Panel hearing and who prepared them.
2. Set out each of the grounds of complaint.
3. Set out the Panel's finding in relation to each ground of complaint, i.e. whether each ground is upheld/partially upheld or dismissed/partially dismissed. It will usually be appropriate to give reasons.
4. Set out any recommendations made by the Panel.
5. Thank the parents for bringing this matter to the Panel's attention and for attending the hearing.
6. Note that the decision of the Panel is final and consider including wording on Alternative Dispute Resolution (please refer to the notes accompanying the Model Complaints Procedure for suggested wording).
7. Remind parents of the confidential nature of the complaint proceedings. Offer to dispose securely of any papers which the parents do not wish to retain.
8. Wish the parents and pupils all the best for the future and express hope that the issues raised are now resolved.