



ST WINEFRIDE'S SCHOOL

*Founded 1868*

# St. Winefride's

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

### Mission Statement

Our aims are:

- To educate the whole child in a caring and Christian atmosphere.
- To encourage our children to reach their full potential, mentally, physically, socially and morally.
- To emphasise kindness, care and mutual respect.
- To promote an awareness of the need and religious beliefs of others. This will enable them to become responsible citizens and an asset in any community.

## **Introduction**

St. Winefride's School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or carers do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedure.

### **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at the school, but it is not limited to them.

Any member of the public may make a complaint to St. Winefride's School about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

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'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. St. Winefride's takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior, but that does not have to be the case. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, St. Winefride's will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. A third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so, may also lodge a complaint.

You should raise any concerns with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at stage three of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs E. Devey (the headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mr P. Strong (the chair of trustees), via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints about the chair of trustees, any individual trustee or the whole board should be addressed to Mrs Sheehan (the clerk to the governing body) via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or chair of trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Complaint campaigns**

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending on the nature and scale of the complaint:

1. Send the same response to all complainants
2. Publish a single response on the school's website.

### **Timescales**

Complainants must raise the complaint within three months of the incident, or where a series of associated incidents occur, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame 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.

### **Scope of this complaints procedure**

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by St. Winefride's other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

<b>Exceptions</b>	<b>Who to contact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions to schools</li><li>• Statutory assessments of special educational needs</li></ul>	You should raise concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs

<p>educational needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's reorganisation proposals.</li> </ul>	<p>or the school's reorganisation proposals with the headteacher and board of trustees.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters that are likely to require a child protection investigation.</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding and child protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). LADO (Ellie Jones 0345 6789021 <a href="mailto:lado@shropshire.gov.uk">lado@shropshire.gov.uk</a>) MASH (0345 6789021).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*.</li> </ul>	<p>You can find further information about raising concerns about exclusion at <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p>*You can lodge a complaint about the application of the behaviour policy through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing.</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure.</p> <p>You may also be able to complain directly to the local authority or the Department for Education (DfE) (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff members' grievances.</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff members' conduct.</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures if appropriate.</p>

	Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by others who use the school's premises or facilities.</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.

## Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

## Stages of complaint procedure

### Stage One – Informal Complaint

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

- Informal Complaints may be made initially on an informal basis by letter, telephone call, e-mail, verbally or during a meeting. They should normally be raised with the class teacher or with the relevant subject teacher if the concern is an academic issue. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with the headteacher. Any concern referred to a member of staff should be resolved normally within five working days.
- Concerns made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless deemed more appropriate to be dealt with personally.

### Stage Two – Formal Complaint

- Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing or by telephone. The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within three working days. Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will do the following:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within ten working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline,

they will provide the complainant with an update and a revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions St. Winefride's will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage two. If the complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the board of trustees (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at stage one.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, or the entire board, or the majority of the board, stage one will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the board of trustees or the diocese. At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

The record of complaints must be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

A written record of all complaints that reach stage two will be kept using the Complaint Record Sheet.

### Stage Three

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage two and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage three – a meeting with members of the trustee board complaints panel, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, trustees available. Members of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school and are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Trustees will be responsible for the appointment of the panel normally within 15 working days of a request for a hearing. Parents may attend and be accompanied by a friend if they wish. Legal representation is not appropriate at such a hearing.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The panel can do the following:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or part.

If the complaint is upheld, in whole or part, the panel will do the following:

- Decide on the appropriate action to take to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the panel will provide the complainant and St. Winefride's with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five working days. The Panel's findings are final.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and will show whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and will list the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

These records are kept securely within the Headteacher's office and will remain confidential, except where the Trustees or the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the

2008 Act requests access to them.

These records should be made available to Trustees and ISI Inspectorate if requested.

Our 'normal' response times should be met as often as possible. Some flexibility may be required in instances of staff absence or outside of term time where it may be difficult to investigate concerns and complaints. Parents will always be informed where there may be reasonable delays.

Parents with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can make a complaint to OFSTED, and/or ISI at the following addresses in regards to the delivery of the EYFS curriculum and only after following the whole of the complaints process (including panel hearing):

OFSTED	ISI
Piccadilly Gate	CAP House
Store Street	9-12 Long Lane
Manchester	London
M1 2WD	EC1A 9HA
Ofsted Helping: 0300 123 1231	ISI: 020 7600 0100

Complaints registered under the formal procedure during 2019/2020: 1

**Approved:** December 2020

Reviewed Annually

**Next review date:** December 2021