



SECURING VIEWS & COMPLAINTS

(Relevant to National Minimum Standard 17 & 18)

This document exists in conjunction with the Whole School **Complaints Policy**, which can be found on the School website.

It is vital that boarders feel that they have a voice and that their views are heard, taken seriously and acted upon. This is a key element of the excellent pastoral care that boarders at St George's receive and it is realised that feeling that one's voice is heard is a source of feeling valued and of self-esteem. Boarders are encouraged by staff to offer their views and it is considered a vital aspect of the pastoral care that we offer. These views might be concerns, ideas, suggestions, anxieties or opinions. Boarders should be able to present their views both privately, confidentially and publicly as appropriate in a way that does not necessarily constitute a formal complaint but does require action. This policy outlines the procedures for expressing a view as well as for making a formal complaint.

There are a number of people with whom you may talk with including the Director of Boarding, and member of residential boarding staff, the School Chaplain, the First Responder, the Learning Support Department or the School Counsellor. There are also two Independent Listeners whose contact telephone numbers are clearly displayed on houses. In addition, the telephone numbers for Childline, the Samaritans, the NSPCC and the Office of Children's Commissioner. It is also helpful for you to consider the team of boarding prefects and even if they cannot help directly, they will be able to suggest the right person for you to talk with. There are a number of aspects of your life that you might need to talk about or which might give cause for expressing a concern or making a complaint. For example being teased, feeling lonely, being made to do something you do not like, you feel misunderstood, you have been spoken to unreasonably, you have been physically hurt, you are involved in illegal activity or know others who are, you feel unsafe or you are being unfairly treated.

Boarders should expect that:

- Any view to be listened to and a record made.
- They receive a response initially within 7 days of any view being presented. This response may only be verbal but it gives vital reassurance that their view is being given thought and consideration. It may of course be that further consultation and meeting time is required.
- They will be kept up to date with progress.
- They will receive an apology if an error or omission has been made.
- If appropriate, and if there are no issues of sensitivity and privacy, concerns, action taken and outcomes are shared publicly for both boarders and the wider community to see.

Relationships between boarding staff and boarders should be such that boarders feel that boarding staff are approachable and that they will make time and listen. A culture exists in each house that boarders have a voice and are heard and that their voice goes some way in shaping boarding and its future.

In order to achieve this, houses should ensure the following:

- Boarders know who they can talk to outside of school
- The independent listeners are known by the boarding community.
- Each house has a Boarding Voice box into which boarders can share an idea, a suggestion or a concern. Complaints can also be made using this box although it is more likely that a complaint would be presented formally.
- Each boarding house has an area of notice board set aside on which recent ideas and actions, questionnaire results are displayed.
- Houses have a grumbles book into which minor concerns are recorded.
- Heads of Boarding Houses meet with House Committees. Securing boarders' views is a key item on the agenda. Minutes are taken.
- Boarders complete questionnaires, both formally in which they are able to offer their views freely.
- The results of such questionnaires are clearly displayed with any action or follow up clearly stated.
- There are other informal forums through which boarders can offer their views e.g. suggestion surgery, one-to-one tutorials.
- Boarders are frequently encouraged to express their views, both verbally and by prominent signage through the houses.
- Whilst boarders are fully entitled to give their views anonymously, it is made clear to boarders that this may hinder the effectiveness with which a particular view may be dealt with. Therefore, boarders are strongly encouraged to be open when presenting their views.

FOR BOARDERS WISHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT SOMEONE OR SOMETHING IN BOARDING

An 'easy-to-read' version of the below is on display in Boarding Houses :

If you wish to make a formal complaint about something or someone in boarding then below outlines the procedure that must be followed:

- Write to your Head of Boarding House or to the Director of Boarding (this can be done either with a hand-written letter, a typed letter or an email).
- Arrange to meet with your Head of Boarding House or to the Director of Boarding
- You may be interviewed and/or asked to write a statement to back up the complaint especially if an issue needs to be investigated further.
- You will receive confirmation that the complaint is being dealt with and a date by which any action should have been taken. This will generally be between 5-15 working days and you will be told if it will take any longer and be offered a reason why.
- If your complaint is about the Director of Boarding, then you should direct your complaint to the Headmistress.
- If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been properly dealt with, then please refer to p.3 onwards of the whole school **Complaints Policy** which can be found on the school website under Statutory Information.
- Whilst boarders are fully entitled to make an anonymous complaint, it is made clear to boarders that this may hinder the effectiveness with which the complaint is dealt with and potentially result in no action being taken at all.

The School will do its best to:

- Deal with your complaint honestly, politely and confidentially.
- Look at your complaint thoroughly and fairly.
- Deal quickly with your complaint.
- Keep you up to date with progress.
- Offer an apology if a mistake has been made.
- Explain what is going to be done as a result of the complaint being made.
- Give a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within the time frames specified in the whole school **Complaints Policy**.

<i>First drafted by</i>	<i>Jon Timmins, Director of Boarding</i>	<i>January 2016</i>
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