

COMPLAINTS POLICY  
ST ALBANS INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

Signed by:

Principal: Mr A Jemal

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The College aims to ensure that any concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, quickly and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, we will review our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances of the complaint.

1.2 We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and so we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents (current parent or legal guardian, and may, at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School) and students should never feel that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at this College. This policy distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

1.3 Parent(s) / You: Includes a current parent or legal guardian or education guardian, and may at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the College.

1.4 We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the College is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the website. This policy will also be used, where applicable, in dealing with general complaints from members of the public.

## **2 Management of complaints**

2.1 The College's complaints procedure has two stages:

2.1.1 Stage 1: informal raising of a concern or difficulty with a member of staff orally or in writing as set out in Appendix 1.

2.1.2 Stage 2: a formal complaint in writing to the principal - further details of how to make a formal complaint and the relevant procedures are set out in Appendix 2.

2.2 Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue, an issue regarding admissions or if the principal excludes a student from the School.

## **3 Confidentiality**

3.1 A record will be kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they were resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year will be held in College and will be supplied to parents on request.

3.2 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority.

3.3 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

## *Appendix 1 Stage 1: dealing with concerns and difficulties informally*

### **1 Informal resolution of a concern**

1. 1.1 We expect that most concerns can be resolved informally. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care or a financial or billing error should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff. Complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are taken very seriously and may need to be dealt with at Stage 2 without action at Stage 1.
2. 1.2 Resolution of informal concerns will be made within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

### **2 Who to contact**

2.1 Where appropriate, concerns should initially be raised as follows:

2.1.1 Educational issues: if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the principal, SENCO or Mentor

2.1.2 Pastoral care: for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to principal, or SENCO or Mentor

2.2 A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within a reasonable time scale during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays depending on staff availability during school holidays

2.3 A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing.

## *Appendix 2 Stage 2: formal complaint*

### **1 How to make a formal complaint**

1.1 If a parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint under Stage 1, or the complaint requires investigation or involves dissatisfaction with some aspect of the College's policies or management, the complaint should be made under Stage 2.

1.2 The full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details to the principal.

1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within a week during term time, or within a week of the start of the subsequent term, if the complaint is made during holidays.

### **2 Investigation**

2.1 The principal may ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator. The Investigator(s) may request additional information from the complainant and may wish to speak to the complainant personally. They may also gather evidence from others who have knowledge of the circumstances.

2.2 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Investigator(s) will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the principal.

### **3 Decision and Appeal**

3.1 The principal will then notify the complainant in writing of his decision and the reasons for it. This will be done within 28 working days of the acknowledgement of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

3.2 Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of a term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel required for the investigation to be undertaken properly.

3.3 Should the complainant not be happy with the Principal's decision, they can formally appeal against the decision. This must be done within 10 working days of the Principal's decision. The Principal will make provision for an appeal hearing. The appeal hearing will sit within 10 working days of the appeal being made. The appeal hearing will be undertaken with three people appointed by the Principal, all of whom are independent of the complaint.

One member of the appeal hearing panel will also be independent of the management and running of the College. Complainants will be invited to attend and be accompanied if they wish. The appeal hearing panel then makes a judgement on the complaint and provides the judgement to the complainant, where relevant the recipient of the complaint and the Principal within 5 working days of the hearing.

3.4 Records of all complaints and their resolution will be kept alongside records of actions taken in response to complaints, whether they are upheld or not. Records are kept with strict confidence.

The member of staff responsible for overseeing and reviewing this policy is Assim Jemal.

Date for review 31 July 2021.