



Parents and Friends of St Johns (PAFS)

Complaints Policy

The vast majority of concerns are dealt with immediately, satisfactorily and at an informal stage, PAFS encourages this approach. However, occasionally things can go wrong and it is not always possible to predict how a minor concern can escalate into a major, stressful and time-consuming complaint. An efficient and accessible complaints procedure will help ensure that all parties are aware of, and have confidence in, a clear process and channel of communication.

Objectives

We are committed to resolving concerns and complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. This procedure aims to:

1. Strengthen parent/guardian confidence and relationships between parents/guardians, PAFS, the school and the wider community.
2. Respond to all concerns and complaints in an open and consistent manner.
3. Resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage.
4. Prevent concerns from developing into major complaints or litigation.
5. Be speedy, with well-defined time-scales and named contacts.
6. Focus on resolution and service review rather than blame.
7. Be accessible to people with disabilities, special needs or language barriers.
8. Promote confidentiality and discretion.
9. Include fair and transparent investigative processes for volunteers as well as complainants
11. Be forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive, malicious and anonymous complainants.

General principles

1. The procedure is designed to ensure that, wherever possible, an informal resolution is attempted.
2. All stages of the complaints procedure should be investigatory rather than adversarial.
3. The procedure is intended to be extended to those persons who may have a legitimate complaint relating to PAFS
4. The responsibility for dealing with general complaints lies solely with officers of PAFS in consultation with the headteacher. They must ensure that any complaint received by them, which does relate to PAFS but to the school will be redirected to the school immediately and that the complainant be informed accordingly.
5. An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where PAFS will refer these issues to the headteacher.
6. In the event that a complainant believes that the appropriate procedures have not been followed by the person dealing with their complaint, the complainant may request that PAFS refers the complaint to the headteacher.
7. PAFS takes concerns seriously and actively seeks to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity. It is usually unhelpful for both parties if a complaint is broadcast to the school community. Therefore PAFS will treat the matter with a high degree of confidentiality and will ask the complainant to do likewise.
8. The PAFS committee are fully committed to the improvement of our association. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues might treat our volunteers in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of PAFS.

Procedure

1. All complaints should be directed to the chair/ vice chair or other officer as appropriate.
2. The receiving officer shall communicate to the other officers.
3. The officers will investigate and involve other committee members where appropriate.
4. The Chair will attempt to resolve the issue informally at first.



5. If an informal resolution cannot be reached then written dialogue will be entered into in consultation with the headteacher. Timelines for responses should be agreed and communicated to the complainant.
6. The committee shall be informed at the next meeting of any complaints; the complainant should not be named or recorded in any minutes.
7. The outcome of all complaints should be minuted.

What is meant by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

Actions which are

- out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
- persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
- personally harassing, or
- unjustifiably repetitious

An insistence on

- pursuing unjustified complaints
- unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
- pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language)
- making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook
- refusing to engage with the officers.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more PAFS members, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue PAFS members or others;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does PAFS expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

PAFS expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members PAFS and the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of volunteers, pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of PAFS and staff in schools work and allow a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;

In the case of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, PAFS may take some or all of the following steps as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the officers to be unreasonable or unacceptable and therefore request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under 'unreasonably persistent complaints';
- require all future interactions with a PAFS member to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, PAFS will respond only to written communication

Physical or verbal aggression

PAFS will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against its members or members of the school community assisting us. If there is evidence of any such aggression will refer the matter to the headteacher .