Status:	Regulatory
Applies to:	Senior School
SLT Reviewer (initials):	CW
Committee Monitor:	Audit

STOVER SCHOOL

Concerns & Complaints Policy

Independent Day and Boarding School for Girls & Boys aged 3 to 18 years

Stover School

Created April 2008

Reviewed November 2025

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Appendix 1 – Standard Complaints Receipt form

This policy applies to all staff, parents and pupils, whilst in the care of Stover School, to include provision before and after school, trips and activities.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Circulation: This policy is written for the benefit of the Governors, the Senior Leadership Team; all members of the teaching and pastoral staff, including school medical/nursing staff and parents who have children at the school. The policy is available to view on the school website (www.stover.co.uk). The Head's PA keeps a written record of all complaints and at which stage of the procedure they were resolved (see Appendix 1).

1.2 Policy status: The policy has been approved by the Head of School and the Governing Body of Stover School ("the School"). It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It takes account of Part 7, Regulation 33 of the *Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014*. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.

1.3 Application: Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue (see Safeguarding Policy) or if the Head of School excludes or asks a pupil to leave and the parents seek a Governors' Review of that decision (see Behaviour Policy).

1.4 "Parent/s"/"You" includes a current parent or legal guardian or education guardian (to include any parent who raised a complaint while their child was still registered at the school and has now left the school), and may at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School.

1.5 Three stages: This policy describes a three-stage procedure:

Stage 1 - Informal raising of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to a member of staff.
Stage 2 - A formal complaint in writing to the Head of School.
Stage 3 - A referral to the Governor Complaints Panel.

2 Policy Aim and Statement

2.1 Aim: The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and is resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The school 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, reviewing systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

2.2 Timescales: The school aims to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When working days are referred to, it means Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

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2.3 **Policy statement:** The school needs to know **as soon as possible** if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. The school recognises that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to our school culture. Parents, staff and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at this school. The policy does not distinguish between a **concern or difficulty** which can be resolved informally and a **formal complaint**. All will be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with this policy. Formal complaints and significant concerns, will be documented in the School Complaints Log (see Appendix 1), held by the Head's PA.

2.3.1 It is important that the complaints and concerns procedure outlined in sections 3, 4 and 5 of this policy, is followed. Parents / carers should not go directly to a member of the Governing Body in the first instance. If they do, they will be referred to this policy in order to ensure that the correct procedure is followed.

3 Management of Complaints

3.1 **Designated Person:** The Head of School will appoint a **Deputy Head Teacher or Head of Preparatory School** to be responsible for investigating and resolving complaints. If the Designated Person(s) are unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, their duties will be carried out by another senior member of staff. The main responsibilities of the Designated Persons are to:

3.1.1 Be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved and to keep appropriate records.

3.1.2 Co-ordinate the complaints procedures in school.

3.1.3 Maintain an on-going training programme for all school employees in relation to complaints.

3.1.4 Monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints.

3.1.5 Report regularly to the Head of School with respect to complaints.

3.1.6 Arrange assistance during any aspect of the complaints procedure for parents who require this, for example, because of a disability.

3.2 Every concern or complaint reported to a member of staff will be noted either in hardcopy or email form, together with the action taken. These notes will be vital if the concern/complaint progresses to Stage 2 or 3 and information is required by the Head of School or Governors. Where concerns or complaints are reported directly to a member of the SLT, they will take appropriate notes as a record of the

concern/complaint.

3.3 Each week at a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting the SLT will discuss concerns and complaints under a standing agenda item. The materiality of these concerns/complaints will be discussed, minuted and recorded in the Concerns and Complaints Logs as appropriate (see Appendix 1).

3.4 A written record will be kept of all complaints and significant concerns in the Logs, and of whether they were resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or preceded to a Panel hearing. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year is posted on the School's website.

3.5 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, requests access to them.

3.6 In accordance with the principles of GDPR, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances. As advised by the Department of Education, from 2020, this would be for a minimum of 7 years where complaints do not have safeguarding implications. Where safeguarding implications exist, 'records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the duration of the term of the independent inquiry in Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused reaches pensionable age or 10 years from the date of allegation if it is longer'.

4 Stage 1 - Concerns & Difficulties

4.1 **Concerns:** The school expects that most concerns, where a parent or pupil seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include a dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. 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.

4.2 **Notification:** Parents should raise the concern initially as follows:

4.2.1 **Education issues -** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the Form/Class Teacher, Head of Department, Deputy Head, Head of Learning Support/House Parent as appropriate.

4.2.2 **Pastoral care -** for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom or in the Boarding House, please speak or write to the House Parent, Form Tutor, Head of Year, Class Teacher or Senior Teacher- Pastoral.

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4.2.3 Disciplinary matters - a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with the Head of Year or Class Teacher.

4.2.4 Financial matters - a query relating to fees or extras should be stated in writing to the Bursar.

4.2.5 Early Years Foundation Stage
For concerns regarding Nursery or Reception please speak or write to the Head of Early Years or class teacher, as appropriate.

4.3 Acknowledgement: The school will acknowledge a written notification by e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, but will be documented appropriately and passed to the relevant person to deal with it.

4.4 Unresolved concerns: A concern which has not been resolved by informal means within 15 working days should be notified in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.

5 Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

5.1 If a parent is dissatisfied with the response to the concern/complaint under Stage 1, or if the complaint involves dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies or management, the complaint should be made under Stage 2 within 15 school days of the last correspondence. If no further correspondence is received from the complainant within 15 school days of the School's response, the complaint will be considered closed.

5.2 Notification: The full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details in an envelope addressed to the **Head of School** or to the **Designated Person**.

5.3 Acknowledgement: The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two working days.

5.4 Investigation: The Head of School will ask a senior member of staff (the Designated Person) to act as "**investigator**" and/or may involve one or more Governors. The investigator/s may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint. The Investigator(s) will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Head of School.

5.5 Decision: The Head of School will then notify the complainant by e-mail or letter of their Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within 10 working days from the receipt

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of the formal 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.

5.6 **The EYFS setting:** Where a complaint is made by a parent in the EYFS setting, the complaint will be investigated in accordance with this procedure and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received. Records of such complaints will be kept in school for a minimum of 3 years and copies will be provided to Ofsted if requested.

5.7 **Unresolved Complaints at Stage 2:** A concern which has not been resolved by formal means within 15 working days can be notified, if desired by the complainant, in writing to the Chair of Governors as an **unresolved complaint and request for a Panel Hearing**. This will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 3 below. If no further correspondence is received from the complainant within 15 school days of the School's response, the complaint will be considered closed.

6 Stage 3 - Reference to Governors' Complaints Panel

6.1 **Acknowledgement:** Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two working days, indicating the action that will be taken.

6.2 **Planning the Hearing:** as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event at least ten working days before the hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the hearing.

6.3 Copies of any additional documents the parent wishes the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors, to be received at least three working days prior to the hearing.

6.4 The parent may be accompanied to the hearing by another person, for example a relative, teacher or friend. The Panel hearing is not a legal proceeding and so legal representation is not necessary. If the parent does wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they should have notified the Clerk to the Governors of this in their initial request for a Panel hearing. If the parent did not do this and wishes to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, they must inform the Clerk to the Governors of this at least five working days prior to the hearing and the parent should note that the Panel will wish to speak to them directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate.

6.5 The Clerk to the Governors will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Panel to all parties at least three working days prior to the hearing.

6.6 **Composition of the panel**: the Panel will normally comprise three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including members of the Board of Governors and at least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school (that being an individual who is outside of the school workforce and not a member of the Board of Governors);

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6.7 The parent may ask the Clerk to the Governors to tell them who has been appointed to sit on the Panel ahead of the hearing.

6.8 The Panel members will choose one of themselves to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings.

6.9 **The panel hearing:** The hearing will be conducted in an informal manner (and will usually proceed even if the parents has subsequently chosen to absent themselves). All those present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and / or may take written statements into account.

6.10 All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. A clerk appointed by the Panel will take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.

6.11 All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his / her comment will be minuted.

6.12 The Chair may, at his / her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

6.13 A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

6.14 **The decision:** The Panel will reach a decision on a balance of probabilities unless there is an agreed position.

6.15 The decision, findings and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the parties involved (where relevant this can include the person being complained about) by electronic mail, normally within five working days of the hearing. If the parents do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, they should inform the Clerk to the Governors of this so that a copy may be given or posted to them.

6.16 The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Council of Governors and the Head of School.

6.17 The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

7 Alternative Dispute Resolution

7.1 If parents decide on completion of Stage 3 that the dispute remains unresolved, the School will provide them with a list of Alternative Dispute Resolution (third party) providers. However, the School is not obliged to engage in the Alternative Dispute Resolution process.

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8.1 Where repeated attempts are made by the parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all 3 stages, this can be considered as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

9 Complaints to the Schools Inspectorate

9.1 The School is inspected by ISI, an independent organisation which reports to the Government on schools. Parents may contact ISI directly if they have a concern or complaint. Alternatively, parents of children in the Early Years or boarders have the right to register their complaint with OFSTED. OFSTED can be contacted on 0300 123 4666.

9.2 ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ISI on 020 7600 0100 or concerns@isi.net.

9.3 Boarding

Parents/carers of pupils in boarding may make a complaint to ISI or children and young people's services, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's investigation.

Contact details for ISI:
CAPHOUSE
12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100
info@ISI.net
Children and young Peoples Services: 01392 386000
Duty LADO: 01392 384964

The whole school is regulated by the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI).

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Date :	Parent :
Concern/Complaint :	
Date :	Initial Action :
Date :	Investigation findings :
Date :	Subsequent action/investigation :
Date :	Subsequent action/investigation :
Date :	Subsequent action/investigation :
Date :	Resolution at Stage:

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Date :	Resulting improvement of practice :

Appendix 1- Record for Concerns and Complaints Log