



PARENTAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

St Piran's School aims to educate and care for its pupils in a way that fully meets the expectations of their parents. But difficulties and misunderstandings may occur from time to time with the result that parental expectations are not met. St Piran's has established this procedure with the intention of meeting the concerns of parents before they develop into complaints and of resolving complaints that do arise as effectively as possible.

This procedure also meets the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003¹.

Background and summary of process

St Piran's is responsible with parents for the welfare of its pupils and for enabling them to develop in a happy environment and reach their full potential. The communities of teachers and of parents of pupils at St Piran's comprise individuals who inevitably have differing views of how best to discharge this responsibility, based on different experiences. These differences of view are to be expected both within the teaching community and within the parental community and between parents and teachers, despite the shared interest in the welfare and development of pupils. Given that there will be such differences, it may not always be obvious when a parent should express a concern or make a complaint.

St Piran's would prefer the parents of its pupils to raise any concerns they may have about the education and development of their children or about any aspect of the running of the School or any part of it, at the earliest possible time. Addressing a concern before it becomes a complaint is in the best interests of pupils, parents and the School, but it can only happen if the School is aware of the concern.

St Piran's sees a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about a real or perceived problem in relation to which a parent thinks that the school or one of its staff has done something wrong, has failed to do something it should have done, or has acted unfairly or impolitely. Most parents will have concerns of some sort about their children's education at some stage. To ensure that such concerns do not become complaints St Piran's wants parents to make use of this procedure to resolve concerns as well as complaints.

The procedure is in three stages. The first stage is an informal stage in which parents should raise their concerns orally with a teacher or with the Head. The second stage is a more

formal stage, in which parents may raise their concern or complaint in writing with the Head. The third stage is intended for matters that cannot be resolved through the first two stages and is a reference to a Complaints Panel. These stages are described in more detail below.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

St Piran's hopes that most concerns and complaints can and will be resolved quickly and informally.

Parents with a concern or complaint should normally raise it with their son or daughter's form teacher. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone he or she may refer it to the Head. A parent may raise the matter directly with the Head if this seems appropriate (for example if the matter concerns the conduct of the form teacher).

Where a matter is referred to the Head he may ask a Deputy Head or another member of the teaching staff to handle it.

The person handling the complaint on behalf of St Piran's will make a written note of the concern or complaint and the date on which it was raised. St Piran's aim is that concerns and complaints raised informally should be addressed within seven days of being raised.

Stage 2 – Formal Reference to Head

If a concern or complaint cannot be resolved informally within seven days or if the way in which the concern or complaint is addressed is not satisfactory to the parents who raised it, then the parents may put their concern or complaint in writing to the Head.

The Head will decide, after considering the concern or complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases the Head will speak to the parents. It is likely that the Head will need to investigate the matter or to arrange for a Deputy Head or other member of staff to conduct an investigation on his behalf. The nature of the concern or complaint and of the investigation that is required will determine when the Head will speak to the parents and whether it is necessary to discuss the matter with them on more than one occasion.

Receipt of a formal reference of a concern or complaint to the Head will be acknowledged immediately in writing. St Piran's will aim to complete Stage 2 references within fourteen days of their receipt whenever possible and will complete them within twenty eight days of receipt.

The Head will keep or arrange for the keeping of written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to a Stage 2 reference.

The Head's proposals for resolving the concern or complaint will be put in writing to the parents who raised the matter, with reasons for the proposals.

Stage 3 – Reference to a Complaints Panel

If a complaint cannot be resolved through the first two stages of this procedure, or if parents are dissatisfied with the proposals for resolving their complaint made through those stages, then they may apply in writing to the Head for the matter to be referred to a Complaints Panel.

A Complaints Panel shall be appointed by or on behalf of the Head within seven days of receipt of the application for a referral to it and shall consist of a chair person who will be independent of the management and running of the school and at least two other people drawn from the governing body or teaching staff who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

A Complaints Panel shall ensure that the parents bringing a complaint have the opportunity to meet the Panel on one or more occasions to present their complaint. The parents may be accompanied at such hearings by up to three advisers or friends of their choice provided that the Panel may agree to additional representation if requested by the parents.

The proceedings of a Complaints Panel shall be recorded in writing.

A Complaints Panel may adopt such additional procedures and conduct such investigations as it sees fit for considering a complaint.

A Complaints Panel may make such findings and recommendations as it deems appropriate in the light of its consideration of the complaint, of the response of St Piran's to the complaint and of its investigations.

A Complaints Panel shall give a written copy of any findings and recommendations it makes and of its reasons for such recommendations to the parents bringing the complainant, the Chairman of Governors, the Head, and, where relevant, the person complained about within six weeks of its establishment.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential by St Piran's except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them or where disclosure is necessary for the purpose of disciplinary or related proceedings in relation to staff of St Piran's or is otherwise necessary in the interests of pupils in the reasonable opinion of the Head.

Further Records and Provision of Information

In addition to the records referred to above, St Piran's will keep a written record in relation to each concern or complaint dealt with under this procedure of whether it was resolved at Stages 1 or 2 or proceeded to a Panel hearing.

St Piran's, on request, will provide to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils, the Chief Inspector of Schools, the Secretary of State or a body approved for the purposes of section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 the number of complaints recorded under stages 2 and 3 of this procedure during the preceding school year.