



JAMES ALLEN'S GIRLS' SCHOOL

(DFE NUMBER 210/6002)

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Aims of the Whole School Complaints Policy

JAGS (including the Junior School) aims to be a listening and responsive school. We encourage pupils, parents and staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

JAGS (Senior School) PUPILS

Pupils who have concerns or complaints should talk to their subject teacher, form tutor or Head of Section in the first instance.

If the resolution is more complex, issues may then be passed on to the Head or her Deputy.

A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.

Pupils should always be kept informed, both of how the matter has been investigated and of the resolution. There should be an agreed resolution within 10 school days, unless specific circumstances mean this period is extended.

If parents become formally involved the procedure described below will apply.

Junior School Pupils

- Pupils who have concerns or complaints should in the first instance talk to their Class Teacher.
- If the resolution is more complex, issues may then be passed on to the Headteacher, Head of the Pre-Prep or their deputies.
- A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- Pupils should always be kept informed, both of how the matter has been investigated and of the resolution.
- There should be an agreed resolution within 10 school days, unless specific circumstances mean this period is extended.
- If parents become formally involved the procedure described below will apply.

PARENTS

In the following sections, the term 'Head' relates to either the Headteacher of the Preparatory School or the Head of JAGS.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- At JAGS, parents who have any concerns or complaints about their daughters' experience should normally contact the Head of Section in the first instance, either by email, letter or by telephone. Heads of Section will always liaise closely with the Head when dealing with parental concerns and complaints. At the Junior School, parents who have any concerns or complaints should normally contact the teacher concerned (if it is an academic matter) or the Class Teacher (if it is a pastoral matter) in the first instance, either by email, letter or by telephone or in person. Staff will always liaise closely with the Head of the Prep or Head of the Pre-Prep when dealing with parental concerns and complaints. We will endeavour to acknowledge such emails, letters or telephone calls within two working days of their receipt and to inform parents of how we intend to investigate the matter.
- A written record will be kept of all concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- There should be an agreed resolution within 10 school days, unless specific circumstances mean this period is extended.
- A letter or email will always be written to parents as a "closure", indicating how the issue has been dealt with and what the outcome is.
- In the event of a failure to reach a satisfactory resolution parents will be advised to pursue their complaint in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure set out below.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- Parents whose complaint has not been resolved by the Stage 1 process, should put their complaint formally in writing to the Head (Headmistress@jags.org.uk). The Head will aim to acknowledge the complaint within two working days.
- The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet with the parents concerned to discuss the complaint within five working days of receiving it, unless, despite the best efforts of all involved, circumstances dictate that the meeting be delayed beyond this timescale.
- The Head (or her delegated representative) will then carry out any necessary further investigations.

- Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be maintained and the School will record whether the complaint was then resolved at this stage or proceeded to Panel Hearing.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting with parents. The Head will also give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Convenor, the *Clerk to the Governors*, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel (jason.peck@jags.org.uk).
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days unless, despite the best efforts of all involved, circumstances such as holidays or existing commitments of the Panel dictate that the meeting be delayed beyond this timescale.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Board of Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by Part 7, Paragraph 33, of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Further Notes

- This policy is made available on the school website to all parents, staff and to pupils, and on request.
- For formal complaints, the School will record whether the complaint was resolved at Formal Resolution or proceeded to Panel Hearing, and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- Records of all formal complaints (i.e. those which reach Stage 2) will be kept confidentially in a separate file for a minimum of seven years. Separate rules for the retention of complaints are in place if the complaint contains an issue regarding to safeguarding.
- Any findings and recommendations following a formal complaint will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.
- The number of formal complaints logged in the last academic year is recorded on the school website under 'Governance' and is also available to parents on request from the school.
- This policy is written with reference to parents of current registered pupils (i.e. those pupils on the current school roll), and parents of past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered. The policy does not include parents of prospective parents (i.e those who have yet to join the school.)
- Complaints must be raised within three months (in the absence of mitigating reasons) of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
- Parents may contact Ofsted and/or ISI should they wish to. The relevant contact details are:
 - Independent Schools Inspectorate - CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA Telephone 020 7600 0100 _or email concerns@isi.net
 - Ofsted – 26-32 Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Telephone 0300 123 4666 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

- The school must investigate written complaints relating to its fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and will notify complainants of the outcome on the investigations within 28 days of receiving the complaint.
- In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage regulations, the School will provide Ofsted (and ISI), on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint, regardless of whether they are upheld.

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS FROM STAFF

JAGS, including the Junior School, aims to be a listening and responsive School. We encourage staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

- Junior School staff who have any complaint or cause for concern should speak to the Head of the Junior School, Head of the Pre-Prep, Deputy Head of the Prep, or Director of Operations as appropriate.
- JAGS (Senior School) staff who have any complaint or cause for concern should speak to their line manager (usually their Head of Department) in the first instance. If this is not appropriate they should bring the matter to the attention of one of the Deputy Heads, the Head or the Director of Operations as appropriate. If this is not appropriate, they should speak to the Clerk to the Governors.
- A written record will be kept of all concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- All complaints will be investigated within 10 school days and a formal letter will always be written as a “closure”, indicating how the issue has been dealt with and what the outcome is.
- When a member of staff is dissatisfied with the outcome and has discussed this with the Head, the Head of the Junior School, or the Director of Operations (in the case of support staff) the matter should be referred to the link Governor.
- In the case of a contractual employment grievance, the procedures outlined in staff contracts of employment should be followed.