SIR WILLIAM PERKINS'S SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES FOR CURRENT STUDENTS AND PARENTS

1. Policy Statement

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. If current parents or students have a complaint the matter should be pursued in accordance with the three-stage process set out in this document. The School is committed to addressing any complaints made during term time as quickly and effectively as possible, and it is the intention that the whole procedure will be concluded within 30 working term time days. Complaints made during the school holidays will be dealt with in the same way, commencing as soon as term starts.

A record of all such complaints is maintained by the Head's PA in order to look for patterns and amend practice as appropriate in the light of experience and are viewed at least termly by the Head. Anonymous complaints will not be investigated by the School.

Parents can be assured that all 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act, requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the 'formal' stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a panel hearing (Stage 3). This written record will also include any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The period for retaining records of complaints at the School follows Department for Education advice which states that complaints which do not have safeguarding implications should be retained for a minimum of seven years. Where there is a safeguarding angle to the complaint, the School will retain records for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, and at least until the person complained about has reached normal pension age or for ten years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

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

SWPS is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory, in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the School's Equal Opportunities Policy

2. Definitions

- **Complaint**: any matter about which a parent of a current student is unhappy and seeks action by the School.
- **Current Student**: any student who is on roll at SWPS.
- **Working Days**: the term "working days" in this policy is used to mean "working term-time days".
- **Parents**: the word "parents" is used in this policy. It is appreciated that in some cases "carer" or "guardian" will be appropriate.
- **Stage 1- Informal Resolution**: most complaints may be viewed as 'Minor Complaints' and are quickly dealt with through the usual channels (via Tutor or Teacher, Head of Department or Head of Year as appropriate) to achieve an informal resolution which is agreed by all involved.
- **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution** complaints that cannot be resolved on an informal basis (Stage 1) may be viewed as a 'Formal Complaints' and the number of complaints in the previous school year is recorded as part of this policy.
  A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Head who will appoint a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team to investigate, make a decision about the complaint, inform the complainant, and seek a formal resolution. If the complainant is unhappy with the decision, the complainant can escalate the complaint to Stage 3.
- **Stage 3 - Panel Resolution**: where a complainant feels that a formal complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved via Stage 2, the Head will inform the complainant of their right of appeal to an independent panel. The panel's findings are final.

3. Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution - this stage should take no longer than five working days in total. If a longer period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant will be informed of the reasons, within five working days, and the new date for resolution agreed.

3.1 It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to whom it has initially been directed to resolve quickly this will be done. Otherwise, the complainant will be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and that person will be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible. The complainant will be informed that it is the School's policy to acknowledge within 24 hours a complaint made within the normal working week, even if the issue cannot be entirely resolved in 24 hours.

3.2 The School aims to resolve minor complaints quickly. If this is not possible, or where a member of staff assesses the complaint is of a serious nature, parents will be advised to put their complaint in writing (and move to Stage 2 - Formal Resolution).

3.3 Unless there are extenuating circumstances, parents have 15 working days from the day a resolution to the complaint is communicated to escalate the complaint to the next stage. If there has been no request for escalation after 15 working days from the days a resolution to the complaint is communicated, the School will consider the complaint resolved.

3.4 If a current student has a complaint:

a) They should contact their Form Tutor who, it is hoped, in many cases will quickly be able to resolve the matter to the student's satisfaction.

b) The Form Tutor will make a written record of the complaint on CPOMS. This will record the date it was received, and any action taken. Senior Staff and the Head's PA are notified of any complaint via CPOMS.
c) The Form Tutor will liaise with any relevant member of staff in an attempt to resolve the student's complaint and record any actions or outcomes on CPOMS
d) In the event that a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the students will be advised to ask their parent/carer to make a formal written complaint to the Head in accordance with Stage 2 (set out below)
e) If a serious complaint is made by a student (or there is any doubt about the seriousness of the complaint), the member of staff receiving the complaint will immediately inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will discuss the issue with the relevant members of staff in order to determine what the course of action should be. This course of action may be to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 immediately. The complainant will be informed of any actions taken and a record of the complaint, and any actions, added to CPOMS.

3.5 Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year, or to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor in the first instance, unless the recipient of the complaint deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

4. Complaints Process

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution - the formal resolution stage should take no longer than ten working days in total. If a longer period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant will be informed of the reasons within five working days, and the new date for resolution agreed.

4.1 A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Head who will appoint a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team to investigate the complaint

4.2 If a complaint concerns a safeguarding or child protection issue, or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (the Deputy Head Pastoral) and the Head will be informed, and it will be dealt with according to the School's Safeguarding and Protection Policy.

4.3 If the complaint is against a member/members of staff, other than the Head, which has not been successfully resolved via Stage 1 process, the Head will give a copy of the complaint to the member of staff concerned. They shall have the right to submit a written response to the Head within ten working days of receiving a copy of the complaint and the right to request an interview with the Head. At any such interview an appropriate Senior Leadership Team member or the Head of HR will be in attendance as a witness.

4.4 If the complaint is against the Head, the parents will be invited to a meeting with the Head within ten working days of the complaint being received. An appropriate Senior Leadership Team member or the Head of HR may be in attendance as a witness. The Head will set out their response to the parents/carers in writing within ten working days of the meeting and the next step of the process will be 4.8 below.

4.5 The member of the Senior Leadership Team who is conducting the investigation, will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews and actions taken in relation to the complaint.

4.6 Once the member of the Senior Leadership Team leading the investigation is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the Head and the parents will be advised of this decision, usually in writing, giving reasons for the decision. This decision will usually be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days.

4.7 Unless there are extenuating circumstances, parents have 15 working days from the day a resolution to the complaint is communicated to escalate the complaint to the next stage. If there has been no request for escalation after 15 working days from the day a resolution to the complaint is communicated, the School will consider the complaint resolved.

4.8 If the complainant is unhappy with the decision and a resolution cannot be found, the Head will inform the complainant of their right of appeal to an independent panel (Stage 3) and a full written report of the complaint must be submitted to the Vice-Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors) within ten working days of receiving the School's decision (4.6).

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5 Complaints Process

Stage 3 – Panel Resolution - the Panel Hearing resolution stage should take no longer than twenty working days in total. If a longer period is necessary to convene a suitable panel the complainant will be informed of the reasons within five working days, and the new timescale for the Panel Hearing agreed.

5.1 Initially, the Vice-Chair will attempt to resolve the complaint in correspondence with the complainant, but if the complainant is not satisfied a Panel Resolution will be sought.

5.2 The Vice Chair of Governors will refer the matter to the Chair of Governors who will convene a Complaints Panel to hear the complaint as soon as practicable and within twenty working days of receiving the complaint.

5.3 The convening notice, which is to be sent to all parties involved not later than 10 working days before the hearing, will outline the procedure for the hearing.

5.4 Each member of the Panel will be appointed by the Chair of the Board of Governors to consider the complaint.

5.5 The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of the members will also be independent of the management and running of the School, (i.e. not a member of the staff or Board of Governors). All other members will be members of the Board of Governors.

5.6 The independent member of the Panel will be appointed by the Chair of Governors from suitable people in the local community who are not otherwise involved in the management of the School. They will be a person who has held positions of responsibility, are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments, and who have agreed to serve in this capacity.

5.7 If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than ten working days prior to the hearing.

5.8 The parents and, where relevant, the person complained about, will be informed that they may attend the Panel Hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other

person who may be a relative, teacher or friend, but legal representation is not appropriate in this context.

5.9 At any Panel hearing a member of staff (including the Head) who is the subject of the complaint may be accompanied by one other person who may be a friend or a representative of a trade union or professional association.

5.10 If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a Panel Hearing, the School will still hold the hearing in conformity with the complaints policy.

5.11 If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint 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 considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the hearing.

5.12 At any hearing:

- The Panel shall be entitled to receive advice on matters of law.
- Both sides must state their case and may call any relevant witnesses in support.

5.13 The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the Board of Governors. Records of the Panel's findings will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act.

6. Board of Governors' Action

The Board will consider the Panel's findings and recommendations and make such decisions as it feels are necessary in the circumstances.

In general, the Board will take one or more of the following courses of action:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- uphold the complaint in whole or part
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures.

The Board's decision is binding.

Records of the Panel's findings and the Board of Governors' decision will communicated to the complainant and any member of staff who is the subject of the complaint. These records will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act.

- The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the School Year 2021-2022: 1
- The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the School Year 2022-2023: 1

7. Monitoring and Review

The complaints process for SWPS is not required to be available to the world at large but only to "parents of students" meaning current registered students. The procedure does not apply to parents of prospective students. The complaints procedure only applies to past students

if the complaint was initially raised when the student was still registered, and it does not cover exclusions.

The Governing Body is ultimately responsible for the effective oversight, review and amendment of this policy and understands its legal obligation to do so.

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Head and ratified by the Governors or as events or legislation requires.

Next scheduled review date: February 2025		Last reviewed: February 2024
Key updates in this version:	• Minor formatting/branding/job title changes	
Interim Update 13/03/24	• *Change to Stage 2 process to reduce complexity and clarify the escalation path to Stage 3.*	