



**Policy Title: Complaints Procedure (Whole School)**

*This Policy also applies to the Pre-Prep*

**Date of Issue:** September 2024

**Date of Review:** September 2025

**Number of Formal Complaints 2023/2024:** 2 (Stage 2 and above)

**Reference:**

Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures,  
January 2021 (Department for Education)

Exclusions Policy

Admissions Policy

Behaviour Policy

**Author:** Head

Version	Date	Amendments
V1.14	30/06/2023	Annual Review – no changes.
1.15	01/09/2024	Annual Review – no changes.

*This policy is made available to parents of all pupils, on the School website and on request from the School Office. It is available to the Staff at the School from the School website, in the Staff Handbook and on request from the School Office. Content of this policy is directly discussed with new staff upon induction into the School.*

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*Collegiate School is committed to child protection and safeguarding children and young people and expects all staff, visitors and volunteers to share this commitment.*

## Introduction

Collegiate School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, should the standard of provision and care fall below what is expected, the School will ensure any complaint is taken seriously. This procedure has been approved by the Head and the Governing Body (the Education Committee has the responsibility for monitoring and reviewing). It provides guidelines for handling complaints.

A complaint may be generally defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Collegiate School will take informal complaints seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

When an individual wishes to raise a complaint the school’s complaints procedure should be invoked through the 3 stages outlined in this policy, beginning with Stage 1. Please note that the ‘normal’ timescales set out in this policy may vary during school holidays.

This policy applies to all sections of the School and seeks to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- response to a complaint is made within a reasonable timescale and in a courteous, efficient manner;
- parents realise that the School will listen and take complaints seriously;
- action will be taken where appropriate.

This policy applies to all aspects of the school's provision, including, but not limited to, Admissions and Disciplinary matters such as Exclusions.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's tutor (Senior School) or class teacher (Junior School), in person, by telephone, or in writing. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the tutor or class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of House, Head of Department or Director of Faculty (Senior School) or Deputy Head (Junior School).
- Complaints made directly to the Head or Deputy Head in the Senior School will usually be referred to the relevant teacher, Head of Department, Director of Faculty, tutor or Head of House, unless the Head or Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. Complaints made directly to the Head of the Junior School will usually be referred to the class teacher or Deputy Head of the Junior School unless the Head of the Junior School deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- In the case of informal complaints, we will normally attempt to resolve the matter in seven days or as soon as is practicable. Should a matter not be resolved to the parents' satisfaction, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaints **in writing** to the Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School, as appropriate. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, it is accepted that

formal complaints can be made in person or over the phone. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within forty-eight hours of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Head will write to the parents within the fourteen-day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he/she is unable to issue his/her decision and informing the parents when he/she will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint in any event.
- If individuals are not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- Knowledge of formal complaints will be limited to the Head of the Senior and/or Head of the Junior School, those directly involved and the Chairman of Governors. Complaints should not be shared with the whole governing body, except in very general terms, in case an appeal panel needs to be organized. If the whole governing body is aware of the substance of a complaint before the final stage has been completed, we will arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School, the complaint should be addressed to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman of Governors or a Governor nominated by the Chairman of Governors will review the complaint. If the complaint is against the Chair of Governors, the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If, upon receipt of the written decision, if an individual wants to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write, within twenty-eight days, to the Head of the Senior School informing him/her of their decision, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing

before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Chairman of the Governors. The Head will normally acknowledge the receipt of the Stage 3 complaint within seven days of receipt.

- The panel will consist of three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school<sup>1</sup>.
- The person chairing the panel, appointed by the Chairman of the Governors, will acknowledge the complaint on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fifteen working days. Further communication between the Chair of the panel and the Complainant will be managed by the Clerk to the Board.
- If the convener of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than two working days before the hearing. Any such particulars received within two working days before the hearing may be disregarded and deemed inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within the timescale.
- The complainants may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If parents are unable to attend on the date of the meeting they may request a postponement which the Clerk to the Governors may seek to accommodate. Only one such postponement may be sought and it may result in the meeting being held more than 15 working days after receipt of the appeal notice.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However, should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within three working

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with DfES guidance, the School will endeavour to appoint an independent panel member who is a retired business person or civil servant, a Head or senior member of staff at another School, a retired member of the Police Force or legal profession, who is not, and never has been, associated with Collegiate School

days of the first hearing. The panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.

- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing via electronic mail or traditional mail to the complainant, the Head, the Chairman of Governors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to the individual themselves. The findings and, if any, recommendations will normally be communicated within seven days of completion of the hearing. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and the Head of the Senior and Junior Schools. Provision will be made for a written record to be kept of all Stage 3 complaints.

**Chair:** The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Complaints Panel, appointed by the Chairman of the Governors, and will be conducted in an informal manner.

**Hearing:** 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. The Clerk will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings. The hearing will not be recorded.

**Evidence:** The Chair will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Complaints Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

**Conduct:** 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.

**Adjournment:** 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.

**Private proceeding:** 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.

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. Records of such complaints will be kept and made available to Ofsted and ISI upon request.

Parents have the right to make a complaint directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate or to Ofsted if they believe that the EYFS requirements are not being met. The contact details for the Independent Schools Inspectorate and Ofsted are as indicated below:

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
AP House  
9 – 12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA

Tel: 020 7600 0100

Ofsted  
Ofsted National Business Unit  
Piccadilly gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
Tel: 0300 123 1231

## **Recording Complaints**

We ensure that we comply with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It is common practice to ask for complaints to be made in writing, however the complainant may have communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties and we allow alternative methods of contact:

- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing;
- In order to prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. Where there are communication difficulties, we will use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point;
- We are aware that complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Data Protection Act.

The School maintains written record of all Stage 2 or Stage 3 complaints that are made whether they are resolved following a formal procedure (Stage 2), or proceed to a panel

hearing (Stage 3) and records any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

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 by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each inspection. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

## **Governing Body Review**

Open complaints should not be shared with the whole governing body, except in very general terms, in case an appeal panel needs to be organised.

The Governing Body (delegated to the Education Committee) annually review the complaints and their handling to inform improvements and the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.



## **Pupil Complaints (Senior School only)**

The following extract from the pupil handbook outlines the process and guidance provided to pupils with regards to complaints:

### **1. Introduction**

At Collegiate School, we want everyone to feel part of a safe and happy community. From time to time, you may be worried or upset about something. This policy tells you about various people available to help you, so that you can choose someone you feel you can trust. The experience of pupils in this and other schools is that, no matter how bad the problem may seem to be, it is almost always a great help to talk about it.

### **2. Is something worrying you?**

Here are some examples of the kinds of thing which can be worrying for young people.

- You are having difficulty with one or more of your academic subjects.
- You think you may be ill and are too afraid or embarrassed to tell anyone.
- You feel very depressed, or that life is not worth living.
- You or your friends are being bullied or treated unkindly by another pupil.
- You think that another pupil is not eating properly, or may be harming him/herself.
- You are worried, angry or hurt about something happening at home.
- You think that another pupil has done, or is about to do, something seriously wrong or dangerous.
- You are caught in a serious situation that you don't know how to get out of, for example to do with drugs, alcohol, money or sex.
- You feel you are being treated unfairly simply because you are a girl (or simply because you are a boy), or because of your colour or religion, or because you have a disability or learning difficulty, or because you may be lesbian, gay or transgender.
- You feel that a member of staff has treated you unfairly e.g. in a punishment given, or in favouring other pupils.
- You feel that you are not given enough privacy or independence.

### **What should you do?**

If any of these things are happening, please talk to someone about it, even if you feel you can handle the situation. It may be that what's going on affects other people at the School, or that you are unaware of all the different ways a problem can be tackled.

There are a number of different people who will be very happy to talk to you and to help you try to find a solution to the problem. It may help to talk first with another pupil who is a trusted friend. However, sometimes you may also need the help and support of an adult or professional. Choose whoever you feel most comfortable and safe talking to:

- Your tutor, Head of House, Head of Sixth Form, the Deputy Head, the Child Protection Officer, Matron, the Head, any member of staff.

We would expect one of these to be the first person you speak to if you have a **complaint** about the School or a member of staff, as it is normally the quickest and most effective way to get to the heart of the problem and resolve it.

However, if you do not feel able to speak to a member of staff, other people to talk to are:

- your parents or other relatives
- an older pupil at the School
- a peer supporter
- Child Line: telephone 0800 1111

If you prefer, you can write to one of the people mentioned, although this does sometimes slow things down.

### **Who else needs to know?**

The School understands that you may wish to talk about a problem only if it is kept secret.

In many cases, this is possible, but there are two exceptions you should be aware of:

- The Head is required by the Governing Body to make sure he is aware of all issues affecting the safety and welfare of pupils at the School. This means that the Head will need to be kept informed by School staff of the broad nature (but not usually the details) of any serious health, safety or welfare issue of which they are aware. If your problem or complaint involves the Head, then one of the Governors or the

Deputy Head will be informed instead;

- The School has a legal duty to keep your parents/guardians informed about your welfare and academic progress. However, if you do not wish them to be informed, please say so, so that the options can be discussed with you.

However, please do not let this stop you from raising complaints or saying when you are worried or upset. Most young people who speak up, say afterwards that it helped them enormously and that the problem did not seem quite as bad once they had a chance to talk it through with someone experienced and helpful.

### **Making a formal complaint**

If you feel that you have not been able to sort out a complaint on an informal basis you have the right to make a formal complaint. You may wish to involve your parents at this stage if you have not already done so. You or your parents should write to the Head setting out the complaint and what you want to be done about it (if the complaint is deemed to be a parental complaint as opposed to a pupil complaint the formal procedures are followed). The Head may suggest a meeting to discuss the complaint but will in any case give you a written answer explaining what s/he has decided to do about the complaint. You will not get into trouble for making a complaint if you believe that you have a good reason for doing so.

### **Policy Evaluation and Review**

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head and amended to reflect any regulatory changes (e.g. ISI regulations) and to implement improvements to the effectiveness the school's complaints management procedures.