



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Collingham College will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to students will be of the highest order. However, if parents have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the college in accordance with this procedure. We are always willing to listen to concerns and anxieties, parental and student concerns being of particular importance. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.

We use the term “complainant” to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. Complainants may be parents, guardians or students. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant’s satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time-frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process, Collingham College will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally if parents feel able to voice them as soon as they arise. Obviously, the more information the college gives to parents the less scope there is for misunderstanding. Parents will be encouraged to give feedback, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology, if appropriate, will resolve any issues. Every effort will be made to allay concerns at this stage and with the least possible formality. Our ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint, as through open dialogue, a resolution should always be able to be accomplished.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child’s Personal Tutor. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent’s satisfaction. If the Personal Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five college days, or in the event that the Deputy Principal or Principal and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.
- In relation to post-results concerns and enquiries, it may be necessary to await the arrival of copies of exam scripts from the boards before an enquiry can be fully addressed.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing as a formal complaint to the Principal using the Formal Complaint Form provided. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chair of the Board will conduct an investigation into the matter.
- In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally the day of receiving the complaint so as to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- Within 10 college days of receiving the complaint, the Principal or a Director will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. At any point in the process, the Principal or the Board may decide or agree to commission a further investigation. If this occurs, the timescale may be extended and the complainant will be informed of the extension and the reason for it.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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. The Principal will give reasons for the decision. A note will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

The Principal or the Board will:

- establish what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the issue;
- interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning; and
- keep notes of each interview.

When the investigation is complete, the Principal or the Board will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- An apology
- An explanation
- A clarification of any misunderstanding
- An admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated
- An undertaking to review college Policies in light of the complaint.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution of this procedure) they will be referred to the Panel Convenor who has been appointed by the Board to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. This should be in writing and include the nature of the complaint and how the college has handled it so far. The Board is obliged to investigate the matter and will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school. The contact details for the Panel Convenor will be the Chair of the Board. His contact details are: Robert Marsden, 23 Collingham Gardens, London SW5 0HL. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One Panel member will be independent of the management and running of the college.

- The Panel will normally convene within three weeks of the receipt of the letter outlining the complaint.
- The complainant, who could be a student, parent or guardian, may be accompanied to the panel hearing by a representative.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five working days of the Hearing.
- A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and

- available for inspection on the college premises by the Board of Directors and the Principal.

Options open to the Panel:

The Panel may:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; or
- recommend changes to the college's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

After the Hearing:

The Panel will agree on the wording of the letter that will be sent to the Complainant and:

- ensure that the letter is sent out in accordance with the agreed time scales and procedure as stated in Stage 3 of this policy;
- write up the notes of the meeting;
- ensure that any recommendation to change college policies or procedures is put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board.

Confidentiality

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The college keeps correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the formal stage, or proceed to a panel hearing, is kept by the Principal for a minimum of seven years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Board examines this written record on a termly basis.

Record keeping for the Whole College

The college keeps a written record of all complaints and details whether they were resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing, as well as the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Principal (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Unreasonable and Serial Complaints

The college defines unreasonable and serial complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'. The college is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and thoroughly and it would be highly unusual for the college to limit complaints or its contact with complainants. However, the college will not accept complaints that involve unacceptable, abusive or threatening behaviour.

Examples of unreasonable and serial complaints include situations in which the complainant:

- does not articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- asks for the complaint to be dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;

- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- will not accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate, violence, or abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowingly provides falsified information, or publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complaints Received

The number of formal complaints received in the previous academic year is available on request from the Principal.

Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7 paragraph 33 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 with the provision of information being made available in Part 6 Paragraph 32 (3) (f) of the Regulatory Requirements.

Applies to:

- Collingham College where the record of complaints is kept for a minimum of seven years;
- the whole college along with all activities provided by the college, including those outside of the normal college hours;
- all staff (teaching and non-teaching), the directors and volunteers working in the college.

Timescale

- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the college to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely college holidays and other factors.

Availability

- This Policy is made available to parents, staff and students in the following ways: via the college website and on request a copy may be obtained from the College Office.

Monitoring and Review:

- The Principal logs all complaints received by the college and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.

- The Board of Directors monitor the Complaints Procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any changes necessary to this policy. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding college year.
- The Board of Directors undertake a formal review of these procedures for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than two years from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Date: July 2022

Dr Sally Powell
Principal

Edward Browne and Robert Marsden
Board of Directors