



COMPLAINTS 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 maybe 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.
- 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 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.

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 to the Principal who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 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 will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. At any point in the process, the Principal 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.

- The Principal will keep written records 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.
- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Principal, it must be put in writing to the Principal who investigates in the same way as with any other.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

The Principal 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 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.

The Principal will decide whether or not a complaint that is resolved at this stage will be deemed to be a 'formal 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 of Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. This should be in writing and include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Directors are 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 Board. His contact details are: Robert Marsden, 23 Collingham Gardens, London SW5 0HL. The Panel will consist of one Collingham College Director and Jenny Welsh (Vicar, St Mary of the Boltons) or one of the Church Wardens of St Mary of the Boltons (Ann Mulcare and Leo Fraser-Mackenzie).

- A complaint that reaches Stage 3 of this procedure will be deemed a 'formal complaint'. The number of formal complaints received each year is published in the Parents' Handbook which is accessible to parents via the Parent Portal or on request from Reception.
- 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 as many persons as they decide.

- 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 re-occur.

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 of Directors.

Confidentiality

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except;

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails

Record keeping for the Whole College

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, or proceed to a panel hearing, is kept by the Principal for a minimum of three 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 Proprietors and Board of Directors examine this written record on a termly basis.

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).

Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Part 7 paragraph 25 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 with the provision of information being made available in Part 6 Paragraph 24 of the Regulatory Requirements.

Applies to:

- Collingham College where the record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three 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 modifications 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: March 2017

Dr Sally Powell
Principal

Edward Browne and Robert Marsden
Board of Directors