

COMPLAINTS

Policy applies from EYFS to Sixth Form and to all Staff	
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Version:	11.23 v1
Author:	Mr Luke Goodman

Version	Date	Paragraph	Material change	Approval
09.22 v1	13.09.2022	N/a	No material changes.	Mr Matthew Bennett
02.23 v1	01.02.2023	1 and 6	Role of the ISI and Ofsted in the complaint's procedure clarified.	Mr Matthew Bennett
05.23 v1	16.05.2023	All	Details added to clarify procedure and timings including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating timings to bring them in line with best practice; • providing more detail re. the Stage 3 procedure; and • providing more information re. the use of personal data. 	Mr Matthew Bennett
09.23 v1	15.09.2023	N/a	No material changes.	Mr Luke Goodman
11.23 v1	06.11.2023	8	Clarified that the Head can delegate responsibility for Stage 2.	Mr Luke Goodman

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

Related Policies

Data Protection

Data Retention and Disposal

Privacy Notices

School Terms and Conditions

1. Introduction



Clifton High School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint about the School, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

2. Availability of this Complaints Procedure

Clifton High School makes this Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day, and will ensure that parents of pupils and prospective pupils who request this procedure are made aware of how to access it. Details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year can be found at the end of this procedure and on the School's website.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Clifton High School will make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), a copy of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils, and by parents of former pupils but only in the circumstances set out below.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will only be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School, or the complaint is about a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions, in which case the Stage 3 complaint must be sent by the parent to the School no later than three term-time days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of the pupil.

3. Child protection and safeguarding

Any concerns about child protection and safeguarding should be notified immediately to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

4. What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within



the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

5. How complaints will be handled by the School

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

The School is here for your child, and you can be assured that you and/or your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

6. Timings

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales, as set out in this procedure. Appendix 2 sets out a summary of the timescales to be followed in the Complaints Procedure.

For the purposes of this procedure, **term-time days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint, although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to school life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescales for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay and will communicate the delay to the parent.

7. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

7.1 Who to contact

Complaints can often be resolved quickly and informally simply by emailing the member of staff involved or discussing the issue with that member of staff.

If a parent has a complaint, the person that they should contact in the first instance will depend on the nature of the complaint. If the issue relates to:

- teaching and learning, the curriculum or special educational needs, the parent should contact the class teacher or the Head of the Infant and Junior School, or the form tutor, the Head of Year or the Head of Department as appropriate;



- pastoral care, the parent should contact the class teacher, or the form tutor or the Head of Year as appropriate;
- a disciplinary sanction, the parent should contact the member of staff who imposed it, and if the complaint is not resolved, the Deputy Head, Pastoral;
- health and safety, the parent should contact the Estates and Operations Director;
- fees or other charges, the parent should contact the Finance Director.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, the parent should make their complaint in writing directly to the Chair of Governors, and should send the complaint by email to the Clerk to the Governors at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk.

Any queries as to whom to contact should be raised with the Senior Deputy Head.

7.2 Procedure

The member of staff (or the Chair of Governors) dealing with the complaint will establish the circumstances surrounding the complaint and will seek to resolve it quickly and efficiently with the parent. If they cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with other members of staff at the School. They will also notify their Line Manager who will consider what (if any) further action is required.

7.3 Outcome

Once the member of staff (or the Chair of Governors) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the proposed resolution will be communicated to the parent within ten term-time days of the complaint being received by the School.

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint, then the parent will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

7.4 Records

The person handling the complaint will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. Records of informal complaints will be kept to allow the School to monitor patterns of complaints and their resolutions.

8. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution



The Head of School may delegate responsibility for any or all of his/her roles in Stage Two to another member of the Senior Leadership Team. All references to 'Head of School' under Stage 2 shall therefore automatically be taken to refer to that member of the Senior Leadership Team where appropriate.

8.1 Complaints which will be dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure

A complaint will be dealt with under the Stage 2 complaints procedure if:

- a. the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wishes to have their complaint dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure; or
- b. the School decides that a complaint should be dealt with as a formal complaint under Stage 2 (instead of as an informal complaint under Stage 1) because, for example, it is deemed serious enough by the School, or the complaint needs extensive investigation, in which case the parent will be notified accordingly.

8.2 Procedure

The parent should make the Stage 2 complaint in writing to the Head of School, and send it by email to Head@cliftonhigh.co.uk. If the complaint is about the Head of School, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors, and be sent by email to the Clerk to the Governors at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk.

The Stage 2 written complaint should be received by the School within five term-time days of the outcome of Stage 1 or the parent's receipt of the notification from the School that the complaint should be dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure (instead of Stage 1).

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Head's Personal Assistant within three term-time days of the School's receipt of the written complaint.

8.3 Designated Person

The Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) will appoint a senior member of staff (the "Designated Person") as follows:

- Senior School learning, teaching and curriculum: Deputy Head, Academic
- Senior School pastoral: Deputy Head, Pastoral
- Recruitment: Deputy Head, Staff
- Junior and Infant School: Head of the Infant and Junior School
- Financial: Finance Director
- Premises and Health and Safety: Estates and Operations Director.



If the Head of School has delegated responsibility for his/her role in Stage 2, the person to whom he/she has delegated responsibility cannot also be the Designated Person.

The main responsibilities of the Designated Person are to:

- oversee the investigation (if required) and resolution of the formal complaint;
- monitor the keeping, confidentiality, and storage of records in relation to the complaint;
- report back to the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) with respect to the complaint; and
- be the first point of contact for parents while the matter remains unresolved.

The Designated Person will (if they believe it is necessary) meet or speak to the parent concerned to discuss the matter, and in such circumstances, will do so within seven term-time days of the School's receipt of the written complaint.

When the Designated Person has completed their investigation or has satisfied themselves that an investigation is not required, they will notify the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) and will report their findings to them.

8.4 Outcome

Once the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) will give reasons for his/her decision. Where appropriate a copy of the complaint report will be given to the person(s) about whom the complaint has been made.

The Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) will make his/her decision and notify the parent of his/her decision and reasons for that decision within fifteen term-time days of the receipt by the School of the Stage 2 written complaint. This may be extended by a further five term-time days if further investigation is required and the parent will be notified by the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) if this is the case.

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, the parent may proceed to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing.

8.5 Records

Every Stage 2 complaint will be recorded using the form in Appendix 1.



The Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) or their nominee(s) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, all actions taken by the School about the complaint, and whether the complaint is resolved at Stage 2 or proceeds to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

9. Stage 3 - Complaints Panel Hearing

9.1 Complaints dealt with under the Stage 3 procedure

A Complaints Panel Hearing (the **Hearing**) will be held in the following circumstances:

- a. a parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaints procedure; or
- b. the complaint relates to a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions.

9.2 Remit of the Complaints Panel

A Complaints Panel Hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Head of School (or in the case of a complaint about the Head of School, by the Chair of Governors). The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaint's procedure.

Any complaint regarding a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by Stage 3. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Head of School to reconsider the decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head of School, that the decision to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head of School to have taken.

With the exception of the above, the remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the Hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

9.3 Procedure

9.3.1 Request for a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing

The parent should make their appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors and send it by email to the Head's Personal Assistant (acting as **Clerk to the Panel**) at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk. The written complaint must be received by the School within three term-time days of receipt



by the parent of the decision of the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) at Stage 2, or within three term-time days of a decision by the Head of School to exclude or remove a pupil.

The letter should set out the parent's grounds of appeal, and the hoped for outcome, and should enclose any supporting evidence which the parent wishes to rely on. A list of the documents which are believed to be in the School's possession and which the parent wishes the Panel to review can also be set out in the letter.

Following receipt of the appeal, the Clerk to Panel, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will refer the appeal to the Panel for consideration.

If the parent is unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parent from taking action, the parent should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Panel and sent to ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be then considered.

9.3.2 Confirmation of receipt

The Clerk to the Panel will acknowledge the Stage 3 complaint in writing within three term-time days of receipt of it and will schedule the Hearing. In the case of any absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has not been involved with the complaint at Stage 2 will fulfil this role.

9.3.3 Convening the Complaints Panel Hearing

The Clerk to the Panel will send written notification to the parent of the date, time and place of the Hearing together with brief details of the panel members who will hear it, at least ten term-time days prior to the Hearing.

The Hearing will be held within 25 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint and will not normally be held outside of term time.

9.3.4 The composition of the Complaints Panel

The Panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Governors and will consist of at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an independent member (i.e., a person independent of the governance, management and running of the School). The Chair of Governors will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Panel.



If a parent has a genuine reason for objecting to one or more members of the Panel, then reasonable efforts will be made to find alternative members. However, where the request is unreasonable or it is not possible to find an alternative member, the Panel will remain unchanged. Objections should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors by sending an email to the Clerk to the Panel at least seven term-time days prior to the Hearing.

9.3.5 The role of the Complaints Panel

The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint by considering:

- the documents provided by both parties; and
- any representations made by the parent and/or the Head of School.

9.3.6 Additional documents and further investigations

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint and any related information be supplied in advance of the Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties no later than five-term time days prior to the Hearing.

Copies of any further documents the parent wishes the Panel to consider which have not already been provided should be sent to the Clerk to the Panel by email at least five term-time days prior to the Hearing.

If the Panel decides that further investigations are required, the Panel will decide how they should be carried out and may adjourn the Hearing for further investigations to be carried out.

9.3.7 Attendance

Parents may attend the Hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If the accompanying person is legally qualified, details must be provided to the Clerk to the Panel by email at least three term-time days before the Hearing, and it will be at the School's discretion as to whether to allow the legal representative to attend. A pupil who is 13 years old or older may attend part or all of the Hearing at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

The Head of School shall be entitled to be accompanied to the Hearing by one person if they wish.

If the parent decides not to attend, the Panel will still meet and consider the complaint and report their findings unless the parent indicates that he/she is now satisfied and does not want to proceed any further with the complaint.



9.3.8 Evidence

The Chair of the Panel will conduct the Hearing in such a way as to ensure that the parties have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Hearing is not however a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses, but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The Hearing will be minuted.

9.3.9 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 of the Panel. If the Hearing is terminated owing to the conduct of the parent or his/her accompanying person(s), the original decision will stand.

Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which the Hearing is conducted must say so at the Hearing before the proceedings go any further and these comments will be minuted.

9.4 Outcome

After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision or the decision to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and/or
- make recommendations.

The Panel's decision may be notified orally at the Hearing or subsequently, and the decision and reasons for the decision shall be confirmed in writing by the Chair of the Panel within seven term-time days of the Hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the Hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final.

A copy of the findings, the reasons for the decision and recommendations will be sent to the parent, the Chair of Governors, the Head of School and, where relevant (and appropriate), any person about whom the complaint has been made, and will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head of School.



It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parent. However, the Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head of School or to the Council of Governors as appropriate.

9.5 Records

The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to Stage 3 and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld).

10. Review

Following the resolution of a Stage 2/ Stage 3 formal complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld or not), the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) will review the complaint and the procedure which was followed by the School to consider whether the complaint represents any systemic issues within the School which may need to be addressed, and whether any improvements can be made to how the School operates and/or how the complaints procedure operates. That review will be documented.

11. Persistent correspondence

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

12. Records and use of personal data

All information will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act, as amended, requests access to them.

The Complaints Procedure involves private proceedings. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceedings shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notices, copies of which are available on the School website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:



- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the Hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

The above may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notices and Data Protection policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notices, Data Protection policy and Retention of Records policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

13. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents of EYFS children should follow the complaints procedure set out in this policy. However, if parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

The School will provide ISI/Ofsted, 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. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with the School's Privacy Notices and the Data Retention policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. The contact details for Ofsted and the ISI are below:

School Office 0117 973 0201
schooloffice@cliftonhigh.co.uk

College Road, Bristol, BS8 3JD
cliftonhigh.co.uk

Admissions 0117 933 9087
admissions@cliftonhigh.co.uk



- Ofsted: 0300 123 1231; enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- ISI: 020 7600 0100; concerns@isi.net; CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

14. Record of Formal Complaints

During the academic year 2022-2023, two formal complaints were made to the School.



Appendix 1

Formal Complaint Log Investigation

This log is to be completed by the Designated Person.

Name of person making the complaint	
Date received by the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors)	
Date of acknowledgement	
Person writing to acknowledge	
Designated Person appointed by Head of School (or the Chair of Governors)	
Nature of complaint	
Actions to be completed	
Likely timescale of looking into the matter	
People submitting evidence and form of evidence	

Date the findings are presented to the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors)	
The Head of School's (or the Chair of Governors') decision	
Date of notification of the Head of School's decision to parents (must be within 15 term-time days of receipt of the complaint)	
Lessons learned and associated actions	
Letter to parents confirming School's actions	



Appendix 2 – Complaints Procedure Timeline

The information in this appendix is a summary of the timings set out in the policy. The policy should be read in full.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Timing	Event
Within 10 term-time days of Stage 1 complaint being received by School	Member of staff establishes relevant facts, makes a decision regarding the outcome of the complaint, and confirms outcome to parent.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

Timing	Event
Within 5 term-time days of outcome of Stage 1/parent's receipt of notification from the School that the complaint should be dealt with under the Stage 2	School receives Stage 2 written complaint from parent.
Within 3 term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint	Head's PA acknowledges receipt of complaint and indicates actions taken/proposed.
Within 7 term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint	Designated Person meets or speaks to the parents concerned to discuss the complaint (if they believe it is necessary).
Within 15* term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint.	Designated Person establishes facts. Carries out investigations (if required) and reports to the Head of School or Chair of Governors, who then makes a decision. Head of School or Chair of Governors notifies parents of his/her decision and the reasons for that decision.

*This may be extended by a further **five term-time days** if further investigation is required.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

Timing	Event
Within 3 term-time days of receipt by parents of Stage 2 decision or the decision to exclude or remove a pupil**	Clerk to the Panel receives Stage 3 written complaint from parent.
Within 3 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 written complaint	Clerk to the Panel confirms receipt of Stage 3 complaint.
At least 10 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing	Panel is appointed by Governors. Clerk to the Panel sends details of Panel Hearing to the parent.
At least 7 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing	Parent may object to Panel members (if he/she has genuine reasons for doing so).
At least 5 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing	Copies of any additional documents requested by the Panel are supplied to parties. Copies of any further documents the parent wishes the Panel to consider are sent to the Clerk to the Panel.
At least 3 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing	Parent confirms if any accompanying person is legally qualified.
Within 25 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 written complaint	Stage 3 Panel Hearing is held.
Within 7 term-time days of the Panel Hearing	Decision of the Panel and reasons confirmed in writing to the parent.



** The School will consider an extension to deadline if extenuating circumstances exist.

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