



# Clifton High School

co-educational nursery pre-school to sixth form

<b>Policy applies from EYFS to Sixth Form</b>	<b>Complaints</b>
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A shaded area denotes a regulation to which all Schools must comply	

*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.*

## Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in the School's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. Every complaint will be reviewed in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing the School's systems and procedures.

A complaint must be registered with the School as soon as possible. A difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to the School culture. Parents and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or their opportunities at Clifton High School.

The Complaint's Policy is available to all parents of current pupils on the School's website and a hard copy is available on request from the School Office.

## Three Stage Complaints Procedure

**Stage 1** - All complaints are normally first dealt with at this informal stage, with notification from a parent either orally or in writing to any member of staff.

**Stage 2** - A formal complaint in writing to the Head of School if Stage 1 does not meet with a parent's satisfaction.

**Stage 3** - A reference to the Complaints Panel if Stage 2 does not meet with a parent's satisfaction.

Please note that a concern about the safety of any child should be notified immediately to the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action or, if you prefer, any member of the Senior Leadership Team or Infant and Junior Leaders and should be confirmed in writing to the Head of School.

All times throughout the policy are in terms of "term-time days" – days when the School has pupils attending. These are the days when the School can guarantee that evidence is able to be gathered and when necessary people are available. However, the School will always endeavour to progress a complaint out of term-time as far as particular circumstances allow.

## Stage 1 Informal Complaint

In the first instance, all complaints raised will be considered initially on an informal basis. Most informal complaints, for which a parent or pupil seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. Many complaints can be resolved simply by talking to

or emailing a teacher involved with the issue. Discussing with the teacher concerned, or the most appropriate member of staff who can address the issue, will often result in the speediest and most effective response and resolution.

### **Notification of a Complaint**

An initial complaint should be raised in the first instance, orally, in a letter or email to the person as below:

**Curricular and Learning Matters** If the issue relates to Teaching and Learning, the curriculum or special educational needs, please contact the Form Tutor, class teacher, the Head of Year, Infant or Junior Leader, or the Head of Department as appropriate.

**Pastoral Care** If the issue relates to any aspect of pastoral care, please contact the Form Tutor or Head of Year.

**Disciplinary Matters** If the issue relates to a disciplinary sanction, it should be raised first with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with the Deputy Head, Pastoral.

**Financial Matters** If the issue relates to fees or other charges, please contact The Bursar.

Any queries in whom to contact can be raised with the Second Master.

### **Timing**

Informal complaints should be resolved within ten term-time days.

### **Resolution**

If there is no resolution at this stage, parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure.

### **Record Keeping**

Records of informal complaints will be logged internally for management purposes to enable patterns to be monitored, including resolutions. The member of staff involved will also inform their Line Manager who will consider whether any further action is merited.

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 Act requests access to them.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

Most formal complaints will arise where a parent is not satisfied with the response after raising an Informal complaint at Stage 1. However, if a complaint is deemed serious enough by the School, needs extensive investigation or there is dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration, this should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details in an envelope addressed to the Head of School and may be treated as a Stage 2 complaint without having progressed through the first stage. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, the School may determine the complaint to be at Stage 1 and treat it as such and notification will be made.

### **Notification of a Formal Complaint**

If the complaint follows dissatisfaction with a Stage 1 complaint, it must be received within five term-time days of the receipt of the outcome from Stage 1. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within three term-time days, indicating the action that is being taken.

### **Timing**

Formal complaints should be resolved within ten term-time days of the receipt by the Head of School of the written notification of complaint. This may be extended by a further five term-time days if further investigation is required and the parents will be notified by the Head of School. Where appropriate the report will also go to any person about whom the complaint has been made.

### **Investigation**

The Head of School will appoint a senior member of staff (the "Designated Person") to be responsible for overseeing the investigation of the complaints and resolutions as follows:

**Senior School Learning, Teaching and Curriculum** Deputy Head, Academic

**Senior School Pastoral and Discipline** Deputy Head, Pastoral

**Recruitment and any other Senior School Matters** Senior Master

**Financial and Premises** The Bursar

**Junior and Infant School** Deputy Head, Second Master

The main responsibilities of the Designated Person are to:

- Oversee the resolution of any formal complaint.
- Monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to the complaint
- Report back to the Head of School with respect to the complaint
- Be the first point of contact for parents while the matter remains unresolved.

If the complaint is concerning the Head of School, then the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, at the School Address who will then investigate the matter.

### **Resolution**

The Head of School will respond in writing with the outcome of the investigation and the decision. If there is no resolution at this stage, parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 3 of the complaint's procedure.

### **Record Keeping**

Every formal Complaint will be recorded using Appendix 1.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the secretary of the state or a body investigating under section 109 of the 2008 Act, as amended, requests access to them. These records will be kept in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

### **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

Where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the formal complaint made in Stage 2, a Complaints Panel hearing will take place. A panel hearing can only be requested if Stage 2 has been completed. This 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.

#### **Notification of a Panel Hearing**

To request a hearing before the Complaints Panel, a written letter addressed to the Chair of Governors, at the School address be received within three term-time days of receipt of the decision by the Head of School at Stage 2. Ensure that a copy of all relevant documents, including any additional documents the Panel need to consider, and your full contact details accompany your letter and state the hoped-for outcome and all the grounds of the complaint. A list of the documents which you believe to be in the School's possession and which you wish the Panel to see, can also be sent. The Chair of Governors, or someone acting on their behalf, will acknowledge your request in writing within three term-time days. In the case of absence, another member of the Senior Leadership Team who has not been involved with the complaint at stage 2 will fulfil this role.

#### **Timings**

The Chair of Governors, or someone acting on their behalf, will acknowledge the request in writing within three term-time days. In the case of any absence, another member of the Senior Leadership Team who has not been involved with the complaint at Stage 2 will fulfil this role. The Complaints Panel will normally be convened within ten term-time days of the request letter and will not normally sit during School holidays.

### **Composition of the Panel**

The Panel 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).

#### **Notice of the Hearing**

The Chair of Governors, or someone acting on their behalf, will send written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will hear it, at least five term-time days prior to the hearing. If there are any genuine reason for objecting to one or more members of the Panel then all reasonable efforts will be made to find alternative members.

#### **The Role of the Panel**

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

- the documents provided by both parties
- any representations made by the parents or the Head of School

### **Attendance**

Parents attending the hearing may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend. It is not necessary for that person to be legally qualified. If the accompanied person is legally qualified or more than one person will be accompanying, details must be provided to the Bursar in writing at least

three term-time days before the hearing. The Chair will have the discretion to limit the numbers of people attending the hearing in the interests of maintaining an informal but orderly atmosphere. A pupil aged 13+ may attend part or all of the hearing at the discretion of the Chair. Copies of any further documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Bursar at least three term-time days prior to the hearing. If the parents decide not to attend, the panel will still meet and consider the complaint and report their findings unless the parents indicate that they are now satisfied and do not want to proceed further with the complaint.

#### **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 owing to the conduct of the parents or the accompanying, 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 these comments will be minuted.

#### **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 Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. All statements made at the hearing are unsworn.

#### **Adjournment**

The Chair may adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.

#### **Resolution**

The Panel's decision may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing within seven term-time days. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Governors and Head of School. Reasons for the decision will be given. The decision may include recommendations and will be sent to the parents, the Chair of Governors, the Head of School and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head of School or to the Council of Governors as appropriate.

#### **Record Keeping**

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the secretary of the state or a body investigating under section 109 of the 2008 Act, as amended, requests access to them. These records will be kept in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy. 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.

#### **Notes for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Complaints regarding the EYFS can be made directly to the Independent Inspectorate (ISI) via their website [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)

When a complaint is received from a parent of a child within the EYFS, the School will notify the parent of the outcome of the investigation within 28 term-time days of having received the complaint.

Clifton High School will provide Ofsted and ISI on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken because of each complaint.

If a parent does not feel the school is meeting the EYFS requirements they can contact Ofsted via <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form> or on 0300 123 1231.

#### **Record of Formal Complaints**

During the academic year 2019-2020 0 formal complaints were made to the School.

#### **Covid Adjustments**

*The Independent Schools Inspectorate have allowed School's extra timing flexibility during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure flexibility as a consequence of this disruption or staff absence.*

## Appendix 1

### Formal Complaint Log Investigation

This log is to be completed by any member of staff investigating a formal complaint. It should be passed to the Designated Person together with all supporting documents.

Name of person making the complaint	
Date received by the Head of School	
Date of acknowledgement	
Person writing to acknowledge	
Designated Person appointed by Head of School	
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	
The Head of School's decision	
Date of notification of the Head of School's decision to parents (must be within 10 term-time days of receipt of the complaint)	
Lessons Learned and associated actions	
Letter to parents confirming School's actions	