



Complaints Procedure for Parents/Guardians

Member of staff responsible:

Head

ISI Code: 33

Last reviewed: September 2025

Next review due: September 2026

The policy requires ELT approval

Location: Every/Parent Portal/Website

Key Points

- This policy gives an outline of procedures and stages that the College will undertake on receipt of a complaint from a parent/guardian
- Explanation of complaint records kept by the College and where this information may be shared
- This policy also applies to Ashville Foundation and Ashville Trading

Definition of Terms

College	Ashville College, including the Boarding Houses, the Pre-Prep School (including Acorns), the Prep School and Senior School
Complainant	The person(s) who is(are) making the complaint
Complaints Panel	A sub-committee of the Governing Body specially formed for the purposes of hearing the complaint
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
Governors	Directors of Ashville College Trustee Limited
Head	Head of the College
ISI	Independent Schools' Inspectorate
OFSTED	Office for standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
Parents	The father or mother or others with parental responsibility of a pupil in the College
Pupils	Pupils who attend the College including pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
Working Day	A weekday, not including Saturdays, Sundays, Public Bank Holidays or College holidays

Introduction and Aims

Ashville values the quality of its relationships with parents/guardians and always seeks to do the right thing for every child and for the College as a whole. In the first instance, any parent or guardian is encouraged to make direct contact with the relevant member of staff whenever there is a query about which they seek clarification.

However, we recognise that, on occasion, conflicts of interest, misunderstandings and errors may occur between parents, pupils and teachers and concerns arise which lead to a complaint. This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a parent or guardian wishes to make a formal complaint. We always aim to deal with such complaints fairly, quickly and, in the first instance, informally. The following provides a statement of the clear and stepped procedures that we use

in handling complaints from parents or guardians. and a simplified flow diagram that outlines these steps can be found at the end of this policy.

1 Scope and Application

- 1.1 This policy applies to the whole College.
- 1.2 This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the College where the parent seeks action by the College.
- 1.3 This policy does not apply to exclusions, to which the College Behaviour Policy applies.
- 1.4 This policy applies to complaints from each of the following:
 - 1.4.1 Parents/guardians of current pupils.
 - 1.4.2 Parents/guardians of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupils was registered at the College.
- 1.5 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the College's complaints procedures.

All parents/guardians should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents/guardians are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents.

2 Record-keeping

- 2.1 All records created in accordance with this procedure are managed in accordance with the College's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.
- 2.2 A written record will be kept of all complaints that reach 'Stage 2 Formal', whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a complaints panel hearing; this will include action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld or not). The written record will indicate any complaints which are specific to boarding.
- 2.3 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 2008 Education & Skills Act requests access to them or under other legal authority.
- 2.4 Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. They will also be made available to Ofsted and the Independent School's Inspectorate on request.
- 2.5 A log of all formal complaints is kept by the Head's PA, which includes the stage at which it has been resolved. Records of complaint are held for 7 years following the date of resolution and then reviewed for retention in the case of continuous disputes. Where the complaint has a safeguarding angle, the records will be preserved up to a member of staff's pensionable age or for 10 years from the allegation if this is longer.

3 Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

- 3.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff.
- 3.2 Where appropriate, complaints should initially be raised as follows:
- 3.2.1 **Educational issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write initially to the pupil's subject teacher (Senior School) or the class teacher (Prep School & Pre-prep). Your complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
 - 3.2.2 **Pastoral care:** for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the pupil's Head of Year (Senior School) or the class teacher (Prep School & Pre-prep).
 - 3.2.3 **Disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it.
 - 3.2.4 **Financial matters:** a query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the Bursar.

If that person cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Lower or Upper School, the Head of Sixth Form, Head of Department or a Deputy Head.

Complaints made directly to senior staff will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the senior staff member deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

- 3.3 An informal complaint provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within three working days of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the parent.
- 3.4 The member of staff to whom the initial complaint was directed will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. The parent will receive a response to the complaint within 10 working days.
- 3.5 Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the member of staff and the Complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the Complainant will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. The College will advise if, for any reason, the complaint cannot be resolved within the ten-day period and may extend the period as necessary.

4 Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

4.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the Complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The letter should include three things:

- Full details of the original complaint and parental perspective.
- Supporting evidence to suggest that the original school decision was wrong.
- The outcome that parents/guardians are hoping for.

The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

4.2 In most cases, the Head will speak to the Complainant concerned normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

4.3 It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations or may delegate the investigation to a senior member of staff.

4.4 The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation has been delegated to a senior member of staff, he/she will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Head. Personal data may be redacted, and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

4.5 Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the Complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision

4.6 This Stage will be completed within fifteen working days of receiving the complaint.

4.7 If the Complainant is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within ten working days.

5 Stage 3 – Independent Hearing

5.1 If the Complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should submit a written request to the Chair of Governors, who will acknowledge the complaint within five working days.

5.2 The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the College. Each of the Complaints Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body. The Chair of the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within ten working days.

5.3 If the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

- 5.4 The Complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be permitted at the hearing. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to explain their position and supporting evidence in more detail (usually approximately twenty minutes) and the school is given a right of reply. The panel may ask further questions. The whole meeting usually takes place within an hour. It is not appropriate for the proceedings to be recorded.
- 5.5 If the Complainant is unable or decides not to attend the Panel Hearing, the College reserves the right to proceed with the hearing in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. A written record will be added to the file.
- 5.6 If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the Complainant's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 5.7 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 recommendations, which it shall complete within five working days of the hearing. The Complaints Panel will write to the Complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Complaints Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing, by electronic mail or otherwise given to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about within five school working days. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the College premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head. The decision of the Chair of Governors or the panel shall be final. A written record will be maintained in College as part of the complaints' log, which details the actions taken by the College as a result of the complaint heard at a panel hearing, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.
- 5.8 This Stage will be completed within twenty-eight working days of receiving the complaint.
- 5.9 Complainants can be assured that all concerns and 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 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

6 Complaints about the Head

Where there is a complaint regarding the Head the following procedure should mirror that in Sections 2 3, 4 and 5, with the following contacts at each stage:

Stage 1: Informal Complaint

Contact the Head directly head@ashville.co.uk

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Contact the Chair of Governors bursar@ashville.co.uk

Stage 3: Independent Hearing

Contact the Clerk to the Governors bursar@ashville.co.uk

The Bursar is the Clerk to the Governors.



7 Expected Standards of Behaviour

Attention is drawn to the information included in Appendix 1 which is drawn from the Department for Education's 'Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures 2020 (January 2021)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>)

8 EYFS

Written complaints at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) age group about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement will be investigated by the College and notified to the parent within twenty-eight days. The record of complaints relating to EYFS will be available to Ofsted or ISI on request. For the EYFS, a record of complaints will be kept for three years as a minimum, as required under GDPR.

9 Alternative means of Complaint

Complainants have the right to raise a complaint with Ofsted and the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, details of which may be found on their websites:

Parents of pupils in the EYFS may also contact Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) or ISI (the Independent Schools' Inspectorate) to make a complaint if they wish.

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Helpline 0300 123 1231;

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk (only EYFS)

ISI

Ground Floor

CAP house

9-12 Long Lane

London

EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Email: concerns@isi.net



10 Numbers of complaints

Total number of Stage 2 Concerns:

2024-25: 0

Total number of Stage 3 Panel:

2024-25: 1

11 Summary of timescales for a complaint

	Initial response	Investigation and Response
Informal	Within 3 working days	Within 10 working days
Formal	Within 5 working days	Within 10 working days
Independent	Within 5 working days	Within 28 working days



Appendix 1: Flow Diagram Outlining Steps for Complaints

1

Informal Complaint

- Contact the relevant member of staff as convenient to discuss.
- We always aim to resolve issues before they become complaints wherever possible.
- If the member of staff and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the complainant should put a request in writing for a formal complaint at Stage 2 of this procedure.

2

Formal Complaint

Contact the Head by letter or email so that a written record can be kept, explaining:

- Full details of the original complaint and parental perspective.
- Supporting evidence to suggest that the original school decision was wrong.
- The outcome that parents are hoping for.

3

Independent Hearing

Following a failure to reach a resolution at Stage 2:

- The complainant should submit a written request to the Chair of Governors.
- Provide evidence to support the complainant's position so that the Complaints Panel can understand as much as possible the nature and detail of the complaint.
- This stage will be completed within 28 working days.

Appendix 2: Unreasonable Complaints

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with us. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We adopt the Department for Education definition of unreasonable complainants as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the College, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints.

Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by the College as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations. The College may judge that a complaint is unreasonable by assessing a number of factors, including if a complainant:

- refuses to 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.
- insists on the complaint being 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).
- refuses to 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.
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- knowingly provides falsified information.
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the College that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. If this continues, we will follow the process set out in the College's Parent, Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing and follow the process set out in the College's Parent, Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct.

Complaints Privacy Notice

This Privacy Notice has been written to inform individuals who are contemplating making a complaint, are in the progress of making a complaint, or have previously made a complaint about what Ashville College does with your personal data as part of the College's complaints process.

Who we are?

Ashville College is a 'Data Controller' as defined by Article 4 (7) of GDPR. This means that we determine the purposes for which, and the manner in which, your personal data is processed. We have a responsibility to you and your personal data and will only collect and use this in ways which are compliant with data protection legislation.

The College has appointed Veritau Ltd. to be its Data Protection Officer (DPO). The role of the DPO is to ensure that the College is compliant with GDPR and to oversee data protection procedures. Veritau's contact details are:

Schools Data Protection Officer
Veritau Ltd.
County Hall
Racecourse Lane
Northallerton
DL7 8AL

schoolsDPO@veritau.co.uk

Tel: 01609 532526

Please ensure you include the name of the College in all correspondence with the DPO.

What information do we collect and why do we require it?

As a College we are obliged to have a complaints procedure in place. As part of our complaints procedure we are required to process personal data.

The personal data we collect about you includes:

- Personal identifiers – your name, address, contact details
- Any relevant information we hold on College systems and databases
- Any information you or a party to the complaint, provides us with
- Any information passed to us by any other organisation
- Witness statements
- Any relevant correspondence we have had with you or another party to the complaint – including internal correspondence about you
- Any relevant video recording (including CCTV), audio recordings or images
- Investigation interview notes

Who do we obtain your information from?

Much of the information we process will be obtained directly from your complaint or from a complaint made by another individual. However, we may need to collect data about you from, but not necessarily limited to, the following organisations:

- Department of Education
- The Local Authority
- Our appointed Data Protection Officer, Veritau
- The Police and/or other Law Enforcement bodies
- Local Health and/or social care providers

Who do we share your personal data with?

Who your complaint is handled by will depend on the stage of the complaint – please refer to the Complaints Policy for details. However, within the College we will disclose any relevant data to any individual (usually an employee or governor) that requires the data in order to complete the investigation, to administer the complaint, or to receive advice about how to handle a complaint.

The following organisations may also receive your data if allowed by law:

- Department of Education
- The Local Authority
- Our appointed Data Protection Officer, Veritau
- Independent Schools Inspectorate
- Information Commissioner's Office
- Any other organisation and/or regulator when the College is legally required to disclose your information.

How long do we keep your personal data for?

Generally, the College will keep personal data collected as part of the complaints process for six years upon closure of the complaint. This is to ensure that the College can demonstrate the complaint has been handled appropriately.

In some cases, information gathered as part of a complaint investigation will need to be kept for longer than six years in accordance with various legislation. For example, any complaints in relation to Looked after Children will be kept for 70 years from closure of the file.

Do you transfer my data outside of the UK?

Generally, the information that the College holds is all held within the UK. However, some information may be held on computer servers which are held outside of the UK. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure your data is not processed in a country that is not seen as 'safe' by the UK government. If we do need to send your data out of the UK we will ensure it has extra protection from loss or unauthorised access.

What is our lawful basis for processing your personal data?

The College is legally required to operate a relevant complaints procedure as per the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

As such, the College relies on Article 6(1)(c) and Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR to process your personal and special category data. This is in pursuance with Schedule 1, Part 2(6)(2)(a) of the Data Protection Act 2018 – this means that the College can process your data as part of the official authority vested in us by the above legislation.

What rights do you have over your data?

Under GDPR, individuals have the following rights in relation to the processing of their personal data:

- To be informed about how we process your personal data. This notice fulfils this obligation.
- To request access to your personal data that we hold and be provided with a copy of it.
- To request that your personal data is amended if inaccurate or incomplete.
- To request that your personal data is erased where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.
- To request that the processing of your personal data is restricted.
- To object to your personal data being processed.

You are entitled, under the UK GDPR, to submit a subject access request for yours or your child's personal data at any time. If a subject access request is made during any investigation under this policy, the College will consult with our Data Protection Officer, Veritau to ascertain whether releasing certain data may prejudice the process. If so, this data may be withheld until after the process is concluded.

You can exercise any of these rights by contacting: head@ashville.co.uk

If you have any concerns about the way we have handled your personal data or would like any further information, then please contact our DPO on the address provided on page 11.

If we cannot resolve your concerns, you may also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (the Data Protection Regulator) about the way in which the College has handled your personal data. You can do so by contacting:

First Contact Team
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
casework@ice.org.uk
Tel: 0303 1231113