



ASHVILLE

Complaints Procedure for Parents/Guardians

Member of staff responsible:

Head

ISI Code: 33

Last reviewed: September 2026

Next review due: September 2027

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, 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 and has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching, co-curricular opportunities and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College with care and in a timely manner, in accordance with this Complaints Procedure

1 Scope and Application

1.1 This Procedure applies to the whole school, including the EYFS.

- 1.2 The College makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the College's website and on request from the Reception office the school day, and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the College will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.
- 1.3 Although this 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. Generally, the College is not legally obliged to consider complaints from members of the public (such as from individuals who are not current parents of pupils at the College) or from anonymous complainants. Should, however, the College decide to consider such a complaint, it will determine the appropriate means of doing so. For the avoidance of doubt, this Procedure, will, at all times, be in the College's absolute discretion, and the College shall not be required to consider such complaints pursuant to any specific process or timeframe including under this policy. Where parents have a complaint about a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under Clause 8 of the College's Terms and Conditions, such a complaint will be managed and considered under Stage 3 of this Policy.
- 1.4 Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.
- 1.5 The College will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.
- 1.6 Although the College endeavours to manage complaints in an open and transparent manner, parents should be aware that there may be circumstances which mean the College is unable to share complete details about how a complaint has been handled by the College, the evidence collated, steps taken in response or other related matters. This could be the case even when a complaint is upheld. For example, this may be because such information constitutes sensitive third-party data (for example belonging to a staff member, pupil or other parent), legal or regulatory requirements prohibit disclosure, or withholding information is in accordance with specific instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive. All parents should also be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents.
- 1.7 "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.
- 1.8 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of this Procedure.

- 1.9 Parents must not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may prevent them from considering complaints if escalated to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

2 What constitutes a complaint

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. Concerns are managed separately and may be escalated in certain cases.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. It may be made about the College 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 College is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the College has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

3 The three stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

3.1 It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

3.2 If parents have a complaint they should normally contact:

3.2.1 **Educational matters:** their child's class teacher (Prep School) or Head of Department (Senior School).

3.2.2 **Pastoral matters:** their child's class teacher (Prep School) or the appropriate Head of Year or Head of School (Head of Lower School for years 7-8, Head of Upper School for years 9-11, Head of Sixth Form for Upper and Lower Sixth.)

3.2.3 **Disciplinary matters:** the member of staff who imposed the sanction.

3.2.4 **Financial matters:** the Bursar.

If the relevant staff member cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult with a senior colleague.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should contact the Head's Office directly to try to resolve the complaint informally. There may however be occasions where, subject to the nature of the complaint, the matter proceeds straight to the Chair of Governors under Stage 2. The school will not continually re-investigate the same complaint and may investigate the same complaint raised by more than one parent as one complaint.

If the complaint relates to GDPR this will be managed by this procedure. Any complaint received by the Head in writing may be delegated to the appropriate member of staff to deal with as a Stage 1 complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

- 3.3 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis at Stage 1, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. This should include any supporting information relevant to the complaint, and the outcome the parent is seeking. The Head may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to consider the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 3.4 In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will speak to the parents concerned within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter and assess whether further investigation is required. The Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 3.5 Written records will be kept of all formal meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 3.6 Once the Head (or their nominee) 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 the outcome in writing. The Head (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision.
- 3.7 In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will complete their investigations and issue an outcome within 20 working days of the complaint being put in writing. The College reserves the right to extend this timeframe if more time is required to investigate a complaint, for example, if a complaint is complex or has multiple parts or where further information is required to enable a decision to be reached in relation to the complaint.
- 3.8 If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors by writing to Governors@Ashville.co.uk. The Chair of Governors will nominate an appropriate person to investigate the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 3.9 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution under Stage 2) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Governors by writing to Governors@Ashville.co.uk within 15 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal and the outcome they are seeking. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- 3.10 The Chair of Governors will then appoint a Clerk to the Panel, whose role will be to call hearings of the Complaints Panel and manage the process of appeal at Stage 3. The Clerk to the Panel will convene a Panel of 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. The Clerk to the Panel will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair

of the Panel. The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 30 working days.

- 3.11 If the Panel or Clerk to the Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.12 The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. In each case, this may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to Clerk as soon as possible and by no later than 3 working days before the hearing. The companion must undertake to accept the confidentiality of proceedings and shall have no right to address the Panel unless expressly invited to by the Panel. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- 3.13 A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- 3.14 The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors. The Panel hearing is not a court case, will be as informal as circumstances allow and conducted in such a manner as at the discretion of the Panel. The Panel will not review any new complaints or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint unless, in the judgement of the Panel, the inclusion of such material would be likely to clarify or simplify the complaints management process.
- 3.15 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 3.16 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 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
 - make recommendations for the College to consider. Stage 3 Panels cannot require that any financial compensation is paid to parents or otherwise obligate the College to take particular steps.
- 3.17 If the parent 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.
- 3.18 The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working 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 Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the College premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

4 Timeframes

Where All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

To enable effective review, the College expects complaints to be raised within a timely and reasonable manner and within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Furthermore, it is expected that if a parent wishes to escalate their complaint to the next stage in the process, they will generally do so within 15 working days of the conclusion of the current stage. Depending on the circumstances, the College may, acting reasonably, consider the complaint closed if the parent does not proceed with their complaint within these time frames. In the event the parent is therefore unable to proceed with their complaint within the time period stipulated, the College reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to the next Stage under this procedure. The College will only consider complaints made outside of the stipulated time frames if exceptional circumstances apply which impeded the parent from taking timely action.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working 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 College 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 timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the College will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The College expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example, the police or local authority safeguarding teams, this may also impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this policy or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform the parent of a proposed new timescale.

6 Recording complaints, confidentiality and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the College will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). The written record will indicate any complaints which are specific to boarding and those complaints made but later withdrawn. The record will also assist the College in its review of any emerging patterns arising from complaints. The record will be reviewed annually by the Chair.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the College is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The College processes data in accordance with its Parent and Pupil Privacy Notices. The privacy notices are available on the Parent Portal for parents.

When dealing with complaints the College (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 of the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of members 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.

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the College's *Parent and Pupil Privacy Notice* 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 College's Data Retention and Destruction Policy/Data Protection Policy – The Data Protection Policy is available on the Parent Portal for parents.

The College will keep records of formal complaints and Stage 3 Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Parent and Pupil Privacy Notice*. 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

7 Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Procedure. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement will be investigated by the College in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure and notified to the parent within 28 (calendar) days of having received the complaint. Stage 3 above will be available to parents if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2. 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.

Ofsted

Can be contacted on 0300 123 1231: or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

8 Unreasonable and vexatious complaints

The decision of the Panel at Stage 3 of this Procedure is final. If parents attempt to reopen the same issue, or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this Procedure, the Chair of Governors may inform them in writing that the Procedure has been exhausted, the matter is now closed, that continued correspondence on the same matters is regarded as vexatious and that the College will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or closely related issue.

We will not normally limit the contact parents have with us. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take appropriate action to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The College defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the College, such as if the parent:

- 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 this Procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with this 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
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the College's Complaints Procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
- 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
- makes repeated direct contact with staff or governors who have not been nominated to manage the complaint in contravention of the terms of this policy
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information

- publishes unacceptable information (such as confidential, misleading or defamatory information) on social media or other public forums.

Parents 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 parent informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the parent explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For parents who excessively contact the College causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the College site. The College may also follow its process set out in its Parents, Carers and Visitor Code of Conduct.

The College also reserves the right to pause or cease to deal with vexatious and unreasonable complaints. This will be an option of last resort and will usually be where:

- Complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- There is an insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- There is an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable **manner**.
- Complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- There are demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

This list is not exhaustive.

9 Numbers of complaints

Total number of Stage 1 Concerns:

2025-26: 5 3 Senior School, 2 Prep School

Total number of Stage 2 Concerns:

2025 26 1

Total number of Stage 3 Panel:

2025-26: 0