



Outcomes
First Group

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Children's Education

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This complaints procedure, as required by law in paragraph 33 [Part 7 of the Independent College Standards) and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding college year will be made available on the college's website.

2.0 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally (Stage 1), without the need to invoke formal procedures (Stages 2 & 3). We take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve any matter raised, as quickly as possible.

3.0 WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as suspensions or admissions).

The Complaints Procedure does not apply to prospective students who have no right of complaint.

4.0 COMPLAINTS FROM PARENTS/CARERS

The procedures set out below only relate to complaints from parents of students, i.e. persons for whom education is being provided at the college. The process set out below does not cover complaints from parents of students who have left (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the student was still being educated at the college).

Informal Complaint (Stage 1)

If parents or carers have a complaint against the college, they may initially wish to contact the college informally either by telephone, in writing or personally after making an appointment. The college will ask the complainant what they think might resolve the issue. The college will consider and resolve as quickly, and efficiently as possible the complaint and will respond with the outcome within *10 days*, (where further investigations are necessary that will exceed this time, new time limits will be communicated with an explanation for the delay). Complaints received out of term-time will be received on the next college day. For example, a complaint made during the college summer holidays will be received on the first day of the autumn term.

If a complainant has difficulty making a complaint in writing, the college will take reasonable steps to support the complainant in making their complaint.

The college will accept complaints made by third parties on behalf of parents. The college may, however, ask for evidence that the third party has consent to act on behalf of the parent (and to be privy to any information discussed during the complaints procedure and any personal data that may be disclosed in the response).

Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

If parents or carers are not satisfied with the response at Stage 1 they should write formally to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint further and respond in writing within 10 days (where further investigations are necessary that will exceed this time, new time limits will be communicated with an explanation for the delay). If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the College's Chair of Governors, also known as the Regional Director for Education: Outcomes First Group, Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, BL1 4AG. The Colleges' Chair of Governors (Regional Director) will investigate and respond within 20 days.

Complaints received out of term-time will be received on the next college day. For example, a complaint made during the college summer holidays will be received on the first day of the autumn term.

If a complainant has difficulty making a complaint in writing, the college will take reasonable steps to support the complainant in making their complaint.

The college will accept complaints made by third parties on behalf of parents. The college may, however, ask for evidence that the third party has consent to act on behalf of the parent (and to be privy to any information discussed during the complaints procedure and any personal data that may be disclosed in the response).

Formal Complaint (Stage 3)

If the parents or carers are still not satisfied with the response at Stage 2 they should inform the College's Chair of Governors (Regional Director) who will arrange a panel to hear the complaint.

We will not normally accept a request for escalation to stage 3 if it is made more than one month after the stage 2 response is sent unless there is a genuine reason, for example, the complainant was unwell.

1. The panel will comprise three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the panel will be independent of the running and management of the college (The member should not only be outside the college's workforce, and not a member of governing body/proprietary body, but also should not be otherwise involved with the management of the college).
2. The date of the panel meeting will consider the availability of the parents or carers as well as the college and will take place within 30 days.

3. Complaints received out of term-time will be received on the next college day. For example, a complaint made during the college summer holidays will be received on the first day of the autumn term.
4. If a complainant has difficulty making a complaint in writing, the college will take reasonable steps to support the complainant in making their complaint.
5. Parents or carers will be invited to bring with them another person or persons to support them at the panel hearing if they wish (The panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing).
6. The panel will hear the complaint and will hear the outcome of the college's investigations and its response to these. The panel will then make findings and recommendations which will be communicated in writing within 10 days of the conclusion of the hearing to the Proprietor, Regional Director, the Headteacher, the parent or carer and, where appropriate, the person complained about.
7. If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, the panel will meet in line with this policy. The college's arrangements for the panel hearing will be reasonable in order to facilitate the parent(s) exercising the right of attendance.
8. A written record of all complaints and their resolution, whether they proceeded to a panel hearing or not, will be kept on the college premises by the Headteacher (Equality Act 2010) and made available to the Proprietor and Ofsted inspectors on request. The college will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. These records and any correspondence relating to a complaint will remain confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act 2002 requests access to the records.
9. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding college year will be published on the college website.

5.0 COMPLAINTS FROM STUDENTS

The procedures below will be followed in the event of a student making a complaint against a member of staff, a fellow student or any other person or situation either in college or outside. Students may wish to talk to an adult they trust about a situation relating to college or to a situation outside college.

Students are reminded that, although they may speak to any member of staff, there may be occasions where information will have to be referred to other agencies such as Children's Services.

Within college, students may talk to any member of Education Staff. A student may merely need a trusted adult to talk a situation through with and may not be making a formal complaint. However, all actual complaints made by students will be recorded by the member of staff in the Complaints Log. The college response to the complaint will also be recorded. If the complaint is serious the student's parents/carers will be informed of both the complaint and the outcome. Some complaints will be referred to other agencies or to the Local Authority. If necessary, a meeting will be called to discuss the issues further.

A student may ask to speak to an adult from an outside agency. The college will, wherever possible, put the student in contact with a representative of the appropriate agency. The referral will be noted in the student's file.

If the complaint is an allegation against a member of staff then the college's safeguarding policy must be followed in addition to recording the complaint. Failure to follow this process may result in disciplinary action.

Additional elements relevant to the complaints process

1. Anonymous concerns and complaints

This policy and procedure only apply in respect of concerns and complaints raised by parents/carers and key stakeholders. We will not, therefore, respond to concerns or complaints raised anonymously unless these are of a safeguarding nature. We will, however, consider the issues raised and take action where appropriate.

2. Repeated complaints

If we have responded to a complaint and we receive a duplicate complaint from someone else, we will assess it to determine whether there are aspects that we had not previously considered. If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will inform the complainant and direct them to the local authority or the Department for education if they are dissatisfied with our response to the original complaint. If there are new aspects, we will follow this policy and procedure again.

6.0 UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

The college is 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 the college. However, if a complainant displays unreasonable or unreasonably persistent behaviour, we may need to take action to limit contact in the interests of maintaining the effectiveness of this policy and procedure and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues.

Examples of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- being abusive or making threats of any kind.
- being physically or verbally intimidating or offensive.
- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- 'Those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the college, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.





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