

CLIFTON COLLEGE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Clifton College is proud of the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with the procedure detailed below. Criticism of professional or personal behaviour is an extremely sensitive matter which needs to be handled with discretion. Nevertheless, the College will regard any such allegation as extremely serious.

This procedure is designed for use by a current parent or legal guardian or education guardian, and may, at our discretion, also be used by a parent whose child has recently left the College. We expect parents to raise any issues that are worrying them straightaway. It may not be possible to resolve or even investigate complaints that are submitted many weeks after the incident complained of. Any complaint which is submitted later than half a term after the incident or issue arising that is the subject of the complaint will not normally be investigated unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Parents of children in Butcombe who are covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) can make a complaint directly to Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) although it is expected that complaints will go through the School's complaints procedures first. Details of how to contact Ofsted or ISI will be provided on request.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue, or if the Head expels or asks a pupil to leave and the parents appeal against that decision.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. **A concern about the safety of your child should be notified immediately to the person you believe is best placed to take action and should be confirmed in writing to the relevant Head.**

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Housemaster or Housemistress. In the majority of cases it is anticipated that the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster or Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult others including a Head of Department, member of the Senior Management Team or, exceptionally, the Head of the School in which the pupil is enrolled ("the Head"). In some instances, it may be appropriate for parents to raise their concerns directly with a member of the Senior Management team or the Head.
- In every instance, a written record will be made of all concerns and complaints, together with the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 working days or in the event that the Housemaster or Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head in which the pupil is enrolled. Receipt of the complaint will be

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

- Almost invariably the Head will wish to speak with, and preferably meet, the parents concerned, normally within 14 working days, of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to investigate further.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision for pupils in Butcombe or the Preparatory School, they should put their complaint in writing to the Head of College. The Head of College, will wish to speak with, and preferably meet, the parents concerned, normally within 14 working days, of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage as described above.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Secretary to Council within five working days of receiving the decision of the Head of College, outlining their complaint and the redress sought. The Secretary to Council will refer the matter to the Chairman of Council who will discuss the matter with the Head of College and respond in writing to the parents within ten working days.
- If the parents are not satisfied with the response then, within three working days they can request the Secretary to Council to arrange a meeting with the Chairman of Council, the Head of College and the parents and a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage.
- The Chairman, after listening to the Head of College and the parents, may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the parents wish to take the matter further, it should be referred to the College's Complaints Panel. Parents should make the request for this referral within three working days of the meeting with the Chairman.
- The Chairman of Council has the authority to appoint and convene the Complaints Panel and the matter will be referred to them for consideration.

A Complaints Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Head of College and/or the Chairman of Council. The panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The role of the panel: The panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

- the documents provided by both parties and
- any representations made by you, the Head of College or the Chairman of Council.

They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities, having considered all of the evidence

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 College or to the full body of Council as appropriate.

- The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall not be a member of the College Council. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Council. The Secretary to Council, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 30 working days.
- If the 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 3 working days prior to the Hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be allowed. Parents are required to notify, 24 hours before the Hearing, the Secretary to Council of the name and background of the person accompanying them to the Hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need to investigate further.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you by electronic mail where appropriate within 14 working days. If you do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to you. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Council and the Head of College and (if different, the Head). Reasons for the decision will be given. The decision may include recommendations and will be sent to you, the Chair of Council, the Head and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made.

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 any third party.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents must also respect the confidentiality of the process. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(k) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State for Education, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal authority.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each school inspection. In exceptional circumstances, or when otherwise required by law some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

There have been no formal complaints that have reached stage 3 in the past.