



# Complaints Procedures

## 1 OUTLINE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES AND APPROACH TO RESOLUTION

Clifton College has long prided itself on 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 with care and in accordance with the procedure described below. This document is available on request (and via the College website) to parents and guardians of current pupils, and parents of prospective pupils. The College's Complaints Procedures are designed to give parents of current pupils the opportunity to make a complaint about the College or its staff or governing body's behaviour if they deem this appropriate and necessary, and have that complaint considered and dealt with appropriately in a timely fashion.

This procedure applies to the whole College including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The procedure has three stages:

**Stage 1:** informal raising of a complaint with a member of staff (further details of this procedure are set out in section 2).

**Stage 2:** formal complaint in writing to the Head Master (further details of this procedure are set out in section 3).

**Stage 3:** reference to the Complaints Panel (further details of this procedure are set out in section 4).

In this procedure 'parent/s' includes a current parent or legal guardian or education guardian and includes a parent whose child has recently left the College if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the College.

Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. Reference to 'working days' means Monday to Friday, when the College is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the College's website.

It is expected that the complaints procedure will progress in a timely manner. The College aims to resolve any complaint efficiently and promptly and Parents are encouraged to bring any complaints to the College's attention as soon as possible after any incident causing concern.

### What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression however made about actions taken or a lack of action by the College. It can relate to any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the College. It may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the College has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done



or acted unfairly.

**Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The College is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not suffer adverse treatment for a complaint that you raise.**

## **2 STAGE 1 - SUBMISSION OF INFORMAL COMPLAINTS**

We use all reasonable endeavors to ensure that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son or daughter's Housemaster/Housemistress or Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If a complaint is not resolved to their satisfaction by the Housemaster or Form Teacher, then the Housemaster may need to consult a Head of Department or Deputy Head. Complaints addressed directly to a Head of Department or Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster or Form teacher unless the Head of Department or Deputy Head deems it appropriate for someone else to deal with the matter.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the Housemaster and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## **3 STAGE 2 - FORMAL COMPLAINTS AND APPROACH TO THEIR RESOLUTION**

If any complaint cannot be resolved in an informal way, the parents may make a formal complaint in writing to the relevant Head Master. The Head Master involved will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take including who is best placed to handle the complaint. The complaint will be acknowledged within three working days indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.

In most cases, the Head Master or his nominee (references in rest of this section to the Head Master are to the Head Master or his nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Head Master will ask a senior member of staff, a member of Council or an external investigator to carry out these further investigations. The investigator may request additional information from the parents and may wish to speak to them personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances.

The investigator will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Head Master.

Once the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents informed of this decision in writing within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint. The Head Master will give



reasons for his or her decision.

If the complaint is against the Head Master, the Chair of Council will receive the complaint and will nominate an investigator (a member of Council or an independent advisor) to deal with the complaint in accordance with the communication and investigation process outlined above. The Chair of Council will, once satisfied he/she has all relevant facts, make a decision which the Chair of Council will communicate to the parents involved with reasons within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint.

If parents are not satisfied with the Stage 2 decision, they can proceed to Stage 3 of the Formal Resolution procedures (see below) and request that a complaint is referred to the Complaints Panel.

## **4 STAGE 3 - PANEL HEARING**

### **Role of the Complaints Panel**

The role of the Complaints Panel is to review the Stage 2 decision and the supporting evidence and establish the facts surrounding any Complaints referred to them. They will consider:

- The documents provided both by parents and the College; and
- Any representations made by the parents or the Head Master involved.

The Complaints Panel Hearing is a review of the decisions made during Stage 2 of a Formal Complaint Resolution process. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not previously been raised as part of the complaints process.

The Panel will reach a decision as to whether, on the balance of probabilities, a Complaint is upheld in whole or in part.

It is not within the Complaints Panel powers to make any financial award or to impose any sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Complaints Panel may make recommendations to the College on any matters as it may deem appropriate.

### **Request and Preparation for a Hearing**

Parents must put a request for a Complaints Panel Hearing in writing to the Secretary to Council at Clifton College, 32 College Road, Bristol, BS8 3JH.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will be appointed by the Chair of Council and will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters concerned in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the College management and operations of the College and the other Council members.

The Secretary to Council, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the request for a Panel Hearing within five working days of receipt and will schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 25 working days of receipt of the request. Parents will



receive written notice of the date, time and place of the Hearing.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the Complaint or any related matter, together with supporting documents, be supplied in advance of the Hearing.

The parents making the Complaint will be expected to attend the Hearing and may be accompanied by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. The Hearing is not a legal proceeding so legal representation is not necessary. If the parents wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they should notify the Secretary to Council at least five working days prior to the date of the Hearing. The parents should note that the Panel will wish to speak to the parents directly and such a legally qualified person accompanying them will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.

The parents should send copies of any additional documents they wish the Complaints Panel to consider at the Hearing to the Secretary to Council at least five working days prior to the date of the Hearing.

The Secretary to Council will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaints Panel to all parties at least three working days prior to the date of the Hearing.

### **The Hearing**

The Chair of Council will appoint one of the members of the Panel to be its Chair throughout the proceedings.

The Hearing will be conducted in an informal manner.

The parties shall have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Complaints 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 present will be entitled, should they so wish, to take their own notes for reference purposes. A clerk appointed by the Complaints Panel will make a handwritten summary of the proceedings which will be circulated for comments.

All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned at the discretion of the Chair. 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 his or her comments will be minuted.

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 such further investigation should be carried out. If necessary, the Hearing will be adjourned at the Chair's discretion.



When the Chair of the Panel considers that all issues have been sufficiently discussed, the Chair will conclude the Hearing.

### **The Decision**

After due consideration of all the facts which the Panel members consider relevant, the Panel will reach its decision and make recommendations where appropriate. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing. A copy of the Panel's decision and any recommendations will be sent by email or letter to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Council and the relevant Head Master.

The decision and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the College premises by the Council and the Head Master.

The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the College's Complaints Procedures.

## **5 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and all other records relating to individual Complaints will be kept confidential by the College except where access is requested by the Secretary of State for Education or where disclosure is required by the ISI during the course of an inspection or under other legal authority. All those individuals involved in bringing and handling a Complaint are required to respect the confidentiality of the correspondence, statements and records relating to the Complaint.

Any Complaint about the fulfilment of the College's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements will be made available to Ofsted and the ISI on request. See below for the relevant contact details.

Parents of pupils who have made a Complaint about the College's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the Complaint being received.

## **6 RECORD KEEPING, MONITORING AND REPORTING TO COUNCIL**

The College keeps written records of all formal complaints, the actions which follow and the approach to their resolution. The record will explain whether the complaint is resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Panel Hearing, whether it relates to the College's boarding provision and the action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld).

In addition, and in line with current best practice, the College keeps a written record of matters falling short of formal complaints in order to enable patterns of concern to be monitored. This includes complaints where the parent is satisfied with the College's



response at the informal stage and matters which are expressions of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important by the parent for which reassurances are sought. We recognise that concerns which are only ever dealt with as single incidents may cause the College to overlook emerging or significant trends with wider implications, particularly regarding pupil well-being. We will monitor the types of complaints raised to identify any trends and to feed these into the College's policies and procedures.

As part of the College's governance arrangements, the Council will review the College's written records as part of its annual review to identify any trends over the previous year and for compliance with the College's Complaints procedures.

The status of complaints made and their resolution is reported to and reviewed by Council on a regular basis.

There were 4 formal complaints registered with the College in the 2022-23 school year.

### **Ofsted and ISI**

Ofsted can be contacted by email at [CIE@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:CIE@ofsted.gov.uk) , by telephone on 0300 123 4666. The Ofsted Complaints Procedure can be found [here](#).

ISI can be contacted by email at [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net), by telephone on 0207 600 0100 or at the following address:

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
CAP House  
9 - 12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA