



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure is for use by students, parents, or any other outside body. It is intended that any complaint can be addressed by this policy; however, in the case of a specific safeguarding /child protection issue it may be more appropriate to notify the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Patricia Brown, in the first instance.

This policy complies with Standard 18 of the *National Minimum Standards* (Boarding) in that:

- It is available to all staff, students in host family accommodation, host families and parents
- It is given to all parents and students at the time of enrolment into the College
- Students and their parents are invited to contact the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board [CSCB] regarding any complaint concerning their welfare. [Contact details appear on notice boards in the College and in student planners]
- A written record of concerns or complaints about host family arrangements and their outcomes is kept by the Head of Student Welfare and regularly reviewed by the Principal
- A written record of concerns or complaints about other matters is kept by the Head of Student Welfare and regularly reviewed by the Principal
- Complaints are resolved swiftly and effectively, balancing the rights and duties of students.

The College operates a 'whistleblowing' policy that allows for any anxiety to be reported, without prejudice, to the highest authority.

Stage One: Informal Resolution

- Parents and others should raise informal complaints or concerns with a student's tutor, personal tutor or with the welfare office – whoever is most appropriate. Criticisms of the professional conduct or competence of a member of staff must be referred to the Principal.
- If a parent believes that a complaint or concern is sufficiently serious or sensitive s/he should talk to the Principal or Vice Principal, who will investigate or arrange for the complaint to be investigated, and then report back in writing, or, more usually at this informal stage, through a discussion with the complainant. The normal time-frame for response will be within a period of 5 working days.
- Every effort will always be made to resolve the problem at the informal stage. Complainants who are still unsatisfied will be informed that they can make a formal complaint (see Stage 2 below).
- In an extraordinary case, a matter affecting college policy may be judged by the Principal, in consultation with the chairman of the Trust Council, to be appropriate for discussion at a meeting of the Council, in order to resolve the complaint.
- A written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received, will be kept.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution

- Formal complaints should be made in writing and will normally be investigated by the Principal in the first instance. In most cases the Principal will meet and talk to the complainant personally, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, resolution will be reached at this stage. If the complaint directly concerns the Principal, however, complainants should contact the Chairman of the Trust Council.

- Any other Trust Council members in receipt of complaints will refer them to the Principal or Trust Council chairman as appropriate, and must not become further involved themselves.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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 Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage Three: Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, they will be referred to the Chairman of the Trust Council.
- The matter will then be referred to the Trust Council's Complaints Panel for consideration. The 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 school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Trust Council, on behalf of the Panel. The Chairman will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 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 4 days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Principal, the members of the Trust council and, where relevant, the person complained of.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. A written record will be kept of all complaints, whether they are formal or informal, whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing and whether they relate to Boarding or Non Boarding issues.

Statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003, by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal authority.

A full record, whether or not the complaint is upheld, will be kept of all transactions and this will be available at all times to the Chairman of the Trust Council or to DfE or other authorised personnel.

The number of any formal complaints registered during the preceding year is published in this current Complaints Policy. In the Academic Year 2022 / 2023 no formal complaints were received.

Where students have concerns or complaints they should follow the student complaints' procedure '*What to do if you have a worry*' or, if preferred, follow the suggestions laid out in stage one – informal complaints. If the concern is not resolved or is of a serious nature the student should ask their parents to follow the procedures above.