

Complaints Policy (D1)

This policy applies solely to parents of pupils' (meaning current registered pupils). Complaints regarding exclusions must be escalated in line with Policy C4 (Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy).

1. Aim

Our school ethos, with the community at its heart, promotes open communication and encourages a continuing dialogue between home and school throughout a pupil's education.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that any complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. A complaint includes any expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where a parent seeks action by the School. Fulham School has long prided itself on its openness and 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 School in accordance with this procedure. Complaints, concerns and all related correspondence will be treated in as confidential a manner as possible and with respect.

2. Roles

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for a complaint and we ask that the School is made aware so it can act. Parents and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at this school.

Parents role- to alert the School

Staff- to alert leadership to the complaint

Leadership- to ensure complaint acted upon for resolution

3. Stages of complaint

NB The timescales specified in this section refer to complaints raised during term-time. During holidays the timeframe is likely to be longer as not all staff are available to address concerns or assist with any investigation. It is not feasible to set a specific timeframe during holiday periods due to such varying circumstances, but the School will keep any complainant informed and always seek to address concerns as rapidly as possible and within a reasonable period.

Please note:

If a complaint relates to a safeguarding or child protection concern, please take due note of the school's safeguarding and child protection policy: in all safeguarding matters formal complaints should be raised directly with the Head as a Stage 2 complaint unless the complaint is about the Head in which case the matter should be raised directly with the Chair of Governors.

There are three stages:

1. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son or daughter's form teacher or subject specialist teacher, whichever is most appropriate. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher or subject specialist teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a member of the School Leadership Team, whoever is most appropriate.

At Stage 1, informal complaints made directly to the Head of Pre-Prep, Head of Prep or Head of Senior will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or subject specialist teacher or a member of Leadership.

The staff member will make a record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days* then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

2. 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 (Pre-Prep, Prep & Senior). If the complaint is about a Head then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Exec Head and if about the Exec Head then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (and the complaint will be managed as if at stage three).

The Head of Pre-Pre/Prep/Senior or Exec Head or Chair of Governors (thereafter referred to as the recipient) will decide the appropriate course of action within three working days* of receipt of the complaint.

In most cases, the relevant person will meet or speak to the parents concerned within five working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. As far as possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the recipient to nominate a member of the leadership team to carry out further investigations. This may be decided at the first meeting with the parents. If, however, the recipient decides to carry out an investigation before meeting the parents, they will be informed of this within three working days* of the recipient receiving the complaint and the meeting with parents will take place within seven working days* of receipt of complaint.

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be maintained.

Once the recipient is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. This will normally be within ten working days of receipt of the complaint. The recipient will also give reasons for their decision (and if considered appropriate will refer to the Executive Head as a means of establishing a productive relationship with parents and pupil. This will not affect the parent's right to proceed to a Stage 3 complaint if the mediation is unsuccessful).

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

3. Stage 3 - Independent Panel Hearing

Complaint heard by an independent panel appointed by the Chair of the Governing Body.

If parents invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will place the complaint that has escalated through stages 1 and 2 and all relevant information, in writing, to the Chair of Governors (via the Executive Head, who coordinates Governor business or directly via contact details provided).

NB- the panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints and if a new complaint is raised to panel then the Chair will refer the matter back to the School.

The Chair of Governors will then convene a panel to consider the complaint. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the management and the running of the School.

The matter will then be referred to the complaints panel for consideration. The Chair of Governors will, acting on behalf of the panel, acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, usually within seven working days of receipt of contact with Chair of Governors*.

If the panel deem 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 two days prior to the hearing.

Complainants will be invited to attend the hearing and told of their right to be accompanied by a friend (NB- this should be an adult and please note that legal representation is not permitted). Where relevant translations/interpreters will be arranged by the Chair of Governors in consultation with the parties. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If legal representation is to be brought before the panel, it will need at least five working days' notice before holding the hearing.

The panel will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible is put at ease.

The panel will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five working days of the Hearing. The panel will write either electronically or by post to complainants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, along with any recommendations. This communication will also be sent to the Head and any other relevant parties.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may contact the Independent Schools team at: Department for Education (DfE) - 0870 0012345

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4. EYFS

Additional requirements apply for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Written complaints will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of EYFS complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. EYFS complaints will be retained for a minimum of three years and the record will clearly state the action taken as a result of the complaint.

Should any aspect of the complaints' procedure remain unresolved, it is possible for parents to bring such matters to the attention of Ofsted or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100 concerns@isi.net

5. Record keeping

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential and subject to the Data Protection Act for three years. The exception to this confidentiality is where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to these records. A confidential Complaints Log is held by the Executive Head which outlines the nature and dates of all complaints received.

The Leadership Team in the school, liaising with governors, will monitor complaints and ensure that any trend is quickly identified and managed in the best interests of our pupils.

In respect of each complaint received, and in line with policy, the Log also includes specific information as to:

- whether the complaint was resolved following an informal or formal procedure, and whether matters proceeded to a panel hearing; and
- the action that was taken by the School as a result of each complaint (regardless of whether it was upheld or not).

Repeat Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

6. Record of Formal Complaints in Preceding Year

The number of formal complaints received in the academic year 2022/23 was:

Stage two- three

Stage three- zero