



SLINDON
COLLEGE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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| Last review: | August 2023 |
| Next review: | August 2024 |
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Slindon 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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Slindon College makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the website and on request from the Front Office during the school day. Slindon College will ensure that parents/carers of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, Slindon College will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents/carers of current pupils.

Complaints by parents/carers of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the College. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Headteacher to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under Clause 7 of the Parent Contract Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

“Parent(s)/carer(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the College is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent/carer believes that the College has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents/carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The College is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents/carers have a complaint they should normally contact (via telephone, email, Portal or in person) their child's Head of House. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents'/carers' satisfaction. If the Head of House cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Assistant Head. An informal complaint will be concluded within 5 working days.
- Complaints made directly to the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Head of House unless the Headteacher deem it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Head of House will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. In the event that the Head of House and the parent/carer fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents/carers will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents/carers should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted via the Clerk to the Governors bursar@slindoncollege.co.uk.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents/carers should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher using the appended Complaint Form to proceed to Stage 2. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned, **within 5 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision. In most cases, the Headteacher will make the decision and provide the parents /carers with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted via the Clerk to the Governors in writing at the College address or by email bursar@slindoncollege.co.uk. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents/carers will be informed of the

decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.

- If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents/carers seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Vice Chair via the Clerk to the Governors in writing at the College address or by email bursar@slindoncollege.co.uk within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents/carers wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- **The Vice Chair via the Clerk to the Governors in writing at the College address or by email bursar@slindoncollege.co.uk, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the College.** The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 working days** prior to the hearing.
- **The parents/carers may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish.** The Headteacher shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/carers' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:**
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents/carers informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within 5 working days of the hearing** (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be

final. **A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents/carers, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the College premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.**

- Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headteacher to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 7 of the Parent Contract Terms and Conditions will be governed by this Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Headteacher to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headteacher, that the Headteacher's decision to exclude/require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Headteacher to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the College's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 20 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 20 working days**.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the College will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to College life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the College will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Persistent Correspondence

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

Recording Complaints and use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the College will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The College processes data in accordance with its [Privacy Notice](#). When dealing with complaints the College (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Any completed Complaint Form

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

The College will keep confidential records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy.

For the academic year 2022-2023 the College received one formal complaint.

Slindon College will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email:
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Appendix 1: Complaint Form

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| Your Name: |
| Pupil's Name: |
| Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant): |
| Address: |
| Postcode: |
| Email: |
| Day time telephone number: |
| Evening telephone number: |
| Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the College about it. |
| What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? |
| Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details. |

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| Signature: |
| Date: |
| Official use |
| Date acknowledgement sent: |
| By who: |
| Complaint referred to: |
| Date: |