



City of London Complaints Policy and Procedure for Pupils and Parents

School Complaints Policy

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents of pupils, at the City of London School ('the School'). This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents and pupils made against the School **except in respect of:**

- a) **child protection allegations (1)** where a separate policy and procedure applies;
- b) **expulsions (including required removals) (2)** where a separate policy and procedure applies;
- c) **appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications (3)** where a separate appeals procedure applies.

Please see notes (1), (2) and (3) at the end of this policy in relation to these three exceptions.

Complaints made by members of the public (who are not pupils or parents of pupils) about the School will be dealt with under the City of London Corporation Complaints Procedure.

The School expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use its best endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made or any concerns that are raised on that basis. If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not relating to the exceptions above must be stated courteously in writing to the Head and will be dealt with under this Policy and Procedure. Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response.

This policy and procedure is available on request to pupils and the parents of pupils and prospective pupils of the School (although parents of prospective pupils are not entitled to use the policy and procedure) and is published on the School's website. While pupils may themselves raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the School will involve parents should this occur.

This policy and procedure in no way overrides the right of the School to act in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions agreed by parents upon enrolment of their child as a pupil in the School, although parents are not prevented from raising concerns or complaints in accordance with this policy and procedure where they are of the reasonable view that the School has not acted in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions.

Please Note: Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously.

School Complaints Procedure

Stage One - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's Form Tutor in the first instance. The receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged by the recipient, normally within 24 hours during term time and as soon as reasonably possible during the School holidays. In many cases, the matter will be resolved to the parents' satisfaction straightaway by this means. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with a Head of Department/Head of Year, an Assistant Head, the Senior Deputy Head or the Head.
3. Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/Head of Year, an Assistant Head, the Senior Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher unless the Head of Department/Head of Year, Assistant Head, Senior Deputy Head or the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Form Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. These records will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the School.
5. The School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal concerns of complaints within five (5) term-time days of them being raised, except where they are raised in school holidays, or within two (2) term-time days of the commencement of those holidays, where the School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new school term (usually within five (5) term-time days).
6. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the Form Tutor and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure.

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

7. If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in Stage One of this procedure), then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head; this complaint should be expressed clearly and courteously. The receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged by the recipient, normally within 24 hours during term time and as soon as reasonably possible during the School holidays. Parents should also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved – the School may contact parents to clarify this before proceeding further.
8. Where investigation is necessary, the Head may delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to a Head of Department/Head of Year, an Assistant Head or the Senior Deputy Head, as appropriate.
9. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

10. In most cases, the Head will speak to or meet with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
11. The Head will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within five (5) term-time days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays or within two (2) term-time days of the commencement of those holidays, where the Head will use her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible after the commencement of the new school term (usually within five (5) term-time days).
12. It may be necessary for a Head of Department / Head of Year, an Assistant Head or the Senior Deputy Head, as appropriate, to carry out further investigations.
13. The Head will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
14. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than five (5) term-time days after the Head speaking to or meeting with parents to discuss the matter (in accordance with paragraph 10 above) unless it is not reasonably practicable to complete any further investigations and the decision within this timeframe, in which case parents will be notified. The Head may also arrange to meet with parents to explain the decision.
15. The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the School's decision. These records will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the School.
16. Where parents are not satisfied with the School's response to their formal complaint, the parents have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by an independent Complaints Panel in accordance with Stage Three of this procedure.

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

17. If parents seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where not satisfied with the Head's decision in respect of their formal complaint under Stage Two of this procedure, the parents may, in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors c/o the School, request that their complaint be further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.
18. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.
19. Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten (10) term-time days of the date of the School's decision made in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure. The receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged by the recipient, normally within 24 hours during term time and as soon as reasonably possible during the School holidays. The parents should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against the School and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by Stage Two of this procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in

this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.

20. Where an appeal is received by the School, the School will, within two (2) term-time days, refer the matter to the Town Clerk (Clerk to the Board of Governors), who will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by the School during school holidays, or within two (2) term-time days of the commencement of those holidays, the School will, within two (2) term-time days upon commencement of the school term, refer the matter to the Town Clerk.
21. The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.
22. Once an appeal has been received by the Clerk, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within two (2) term-time days, and inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.
23. The Clerk will then make provision for a hearing before an independent Complaints Panel hearing, appointed by or on behalf of the Board of Governors, to consider the matter as soon as possible, normally no later than twenty (20) school days, after receipt by the School of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke Stage Three of this procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
24. The independent Complaints Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including two Governors on the School's Board of Governors and one person independent of the management and running of the School. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education:

"Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered."
25. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - a) The parent(s) (and, if aged 16 or over, the pupil), who may be accompanied by one other person, usually a friend or relative;
 - b) The Head of the School, who may be accompanied by a colleague; and
 - c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.

Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

26. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
 - a) documents in support of complaint(s),

- b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
- c) written submission(s) setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

27. Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than ten (10) term-time days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five (5) term-time days in advance of the Panel hearing.
28. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint(s) immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
29. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision as to whether to uphold or reject the complaint, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five (5) term-time days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final, although any recommendations which may have financial implications for the School may be subject to formal approval from the relevant authorities, e.g. the Board of Governors.
30. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents (the complainant), the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel. These findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise, within five (5) term-time days of the Panel reaching its decision.

Provision of information

31. The School will keep a record of all complaints that are made under Stage Two of this procedure, with details of:
 - a) Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure (at Stage Two of this procedure), or proceed to a Complaints Panel (Stage Three) hearing; and
 - b) Action taken by the School, including decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, regardless of whether the complaint(s) are upheld.

This record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the School.

32. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential (except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the *Education and Skills Act 2008* requests access to them).
33. Information regarding the number of complaints made under the formal procedure (Stage 2 and / or Stage 3 above) may be requested from the Head's EA. The Head's EA may be contacted at HeadEA@cityoflondonschool.org.uk.

Notes

- (1) See Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- (2) See Expulsion review procedure
- (3) See Academic dishonesty procedure

Review of Policy

Last reviewed by:	RMB
Date last reviewed:	May 2017 (regarding Provision of Information)
Signed for Governors:	
Date signed:	February 2017

Appendix 1

Summary of timescales for handling a complaint. 'Days' here refer to working days during school term time (i.e. term-time days).

	Acknowledgement of receipt of complaint	Initial response by School / hearing	Decision
Informal (Stage One)	1 day (normally)	5 days from receipt of complaint	Included in the initial response
Formal (Stage Two)	1 day (normally)	5 days from receipt of complaint	5 days after hearing
Panel (Stage Three)	4 days	20 days from receipt of complaint	10 days after hearing