

COMPLAINTS

Policy applies from EYFS to Sixth Form and to all Staff

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| Date policy reviewed: | 16.09.2024 |
| Date of next review: | 16.09.2025 |
| Version: | 09.24 v1 |
| Author: | Mr Will Phelan |

| Version | Date | Paragraph | Material change | Approval |
|----------|------------|-----------|--|-----------------|
| 09.23 v1 | 15.09.2023 | N/a | No material changes. | Mr Luke Goodman |
| 11.23 v1 | 06.11.2023 | 8 | Clarified that the Head can delegate responsibility for Stage 2. | Mr Luke Goodman |
| 09.24 v1 | 16.09.2024 | 7 | Person responsible for handling Stage 1 complaint amended. Time scale for contacting parents inserted. | Mr Will Phelan |
| | | 8 | Clarified that the Head of School is usually responsible for handling Stage 2 complaints but may nominate another member of staff to manage the complaint. | |
| | | 8.2 | Right of Chair of Governors to appoint a nominee confirmed. Time scale for acknowledging complaint amended. | |
| | | 8.3 | Time limit for bringing a Stage 2 complaint removed. | |
| | | 9.4 | Time scale for meeting with parents amended. | |
| | | 9.7.1 | Right to object to a panel member removed. Clarified that legal representation is not appropriate. | |

Clifton High School is committed to child protection and safeguarding children and young people and expects all staff, visitors and volunteers to share this commitment.



Related Policies

Data Protection

Data Retention and Disposal

Privacy Notices

School Terms and Conditions

1. Introduction

Clifton High School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint about the School, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with the complaints procedure set out in this policy

2. Availability of this Complaints Procedure

Clifton High School makes this complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day and will ensure that parents of pupils and prospective pupils who request this procedure are made aware of how to access it and 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) Regulations 2014, Clifton High School will make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), a copy of this complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this complaints procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils, and by parents of former pupils but only in the circumstances set out in the paragraph below.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will only be dealt with under this complaints procedure if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School, or the complaint is about a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions, in which case such a review must be requested within three term-time days of the decision to exclude or require removal of the pupil.

School Office 0117 973 0201
schooloffice@cliftonhigh.co.uk

College Road, Bristol, BS8 3JD
cliftonhigh.co.uk

Admissions 0117 933 9087
admissions@cliftonhigh.co.uk



3. Child protection and safeguarding

Any concerns about child protection and safeguarding should be notified immediately to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

4. What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School 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 School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

5. Confidentiality and other legal and regulatory obligations

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

The School is here for your child, and you can be assured that you and/or your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

6. Timings

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales, as set out in this procedure. Appendix 2 sets out a summary of the timescales to be followed in the complaints procedure.

For the purposes of this procedure, **term-time 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 School 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 school life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescales for resolving a complaint during term



time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay and will communicate the delay to the parent.

7. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

7.1 Contact and procedure

If a parent has a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Class Teacher/Form Tutor. If the Class Teacher/Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with a Head of Department/the Head of Year/the Head of the Infant and Junior School/the relevant Deputy Head.

A Stage 1 complaint made directly to a Head of Department/Head of Year/the Head of the Infant and Junior School/a Deputy Head will usually be referred to the individual Class Teacher/Form Tutor, unless the person to whom the complaint has been made deems it appropriate to deal with the complaint themselves.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, the parent should make their complaint in writing directly to the Chair of Governors, and should send the complaint by email to the Clerk to the Governors at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk.

The investigating member of staff will establish the circumstances surrounding the complaint and will seek to resolve it quickly and efficiently with the parent. They will make contact with the parent within two term-time days of receipt of the complaint and will normally arrange an opportunity for the parent to discuss the matter either on the phone, online, or in a face-to-face meeting.

7.2 Outcome

Once the investigating member of staff is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the proposed resolution will be communicated to the parent.

If the matter is not resolved within 10 term-time days of the complaint being received by the School, or the investigating member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parent will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this complaints procedure.

7.3 Records



The investigating member of staff will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. Records of informal complaints will be kept, allowing the School to monitor patterns of complaints and their resolutions.

8. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

8.1 Complaints dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure

A complaint will be dealt with under the Stage 2 complaints procedure if:

- a. the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis under Stage 1; or
- b. the School decides that a complaint should be dealt with as a formal complaint under Stage 2 (instead of as an informal complaint under Stage 1) because, for example, it is deemed serious enough by the School, or the complaint needs extensive investigation, in which case the parent will be notified accordingly.

8.2 Making a Stage 2 complaint

A parent should make a Stage 2 complaint in writing to the Head of School and send it by email to Head@cliftonhigh.co.uk.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors and be sent by email to the Clerk to the Governors at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 procedure described below will then be followed as if references to the Head of School (or their nominee) are to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Head's Personal Assistant within two term-time days of the School's receipt of the written complaint.

8.3 Procedure

The Head of School may, in some circumstances, deem it appropriate to nominate another member of staff to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process.

The Head of School (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take, and will aim to meet with the parents face to face, and should this not be possible online, within five term-time days of the complaint being received.



If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. However, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out, and the Head of School (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation.

8.4 Outcome

Once the Head of School (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School (or their nominee) will give reasons for their decision.

The Head of School (or their nominee) will make their decision and notify the parent of their decision and reasons for that decision within 15 term-time days of the receipt by the School of the Stage 2 written complaint. This may be extended by a further five term-time days if further investigation is required and the parent will be notified by the Head of School (or their nominee) if that is the case.

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, the parent may proceed to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing.

8.5 Records

Every Stage 2 complaint will be recorded using the form in Appendix 1.

9. Stage 3 - Complaints Panel Hearing

9.1 Complaints dealt with under the Stage 3 procedure

A Complaints Panel Hearing (the **Hearing**) will be held in the following circumstances:

- a. a parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaints procedure and appeals in writing to the School; or
- b. the complaint relates to a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions.

Any complaint regarding a decision taken by the Head of School to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by Stage 3. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Head of School to reconsider the decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head of School, that the decision to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil, was not a reasonable decision for the Head of School to have taken.



9.2 Request for a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing

The parent should make their appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors and send it by email to the Head's Personal Assistant (acting as **Clerk to the Panel**) at ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk.

The letter should set out the parent's grounds of appeal and should enclose any supporting evidence which the parent wishes to rely on. A list of the documents which are believed to be in the School's possession and which the parent wishes the Complaints Panel to review can also be set out in the letter.

The written complaint must be received by the School within three term-time days of receipt by the parent of the decision of the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) at Stage 2, or within three term-time days of a decision by the Head of School to exclude or remove a pupil.

If the parent is unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parent from taking action, the parent should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Panel and sent to ncridland@cliftonhigh.co.uk in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be then considered.

9.3 Confirmation of receipt

On receipt of a Stage 3 complaint, the Clerk to the Panel, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Clerk to the Panel will acknowledge the Stage 3 complaint in writing within three term-time days of receipt of it and will schedule the Hearing.

9.4 The Complaints Panel

The Panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Governors and will consist of at least three individuals not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an independent member (i.e., a person independent of the governance, management and running of the School). The Chair of Governors will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Panel.

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.

9.5 Convening the Complaints Panel Hearing

School Office 0117 973 0201
schooloffice@cliftonhigh.co.uk

College Road, Bristol, BS8 3JD
cliftonhigh.co.uk

Admissions 0117 933 9087
admissions@cliftonhigh.co.uk



The Clerk to the Panel will send written notification to the parent of the date, time and place of the Hearing together with brief details of the panel members who will hear it, at least ten term-time days prior to the Hearing.

9.6 Additional documents

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint and any related information be supplied in advance of the Hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties no later than five-term time days prior to the Hearing.

Copies of any further documents the parent wishes the Panel to consider which have not already been provided should be sent to the Clerk to the Panel by email at least five term-time days prior to the Hearing.

9.7 The Hearing

The Hearing will be held within 25 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint and will not normally be held outside of term time.

9.7.1 Attendance

Parents may attend the Hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. A pupil who is 13 years old or older may attend part or all of the Hearing at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

The Stage 2 decision maker shall be entitled to be accompanied to the Hearing by one person if they wish.

If the parent decides not to attend, the Panel will still meet and consider the complaint and report their findings unless the parent indicates that they are now satisfied and does not want to proceed any further with the complaint.

9.7.2 Evidence

The Chair of the Panel will conduct the Hearing in such a way as to ensure that the parties have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Hearing is not however a legal proceeding, and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses, but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The Hearing will be minuted.



9.7.3 Further investigation

If the Panel decides that further investigations are required, the Panel will decide how they should be carried out and may adjourn the Hearing for further investigations to be carried out.

9.7.4 Conduct

All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel. If the Hearing is terminated owing to the conduct of the parent or his/her accompanying person(s), the original decision will stand.

Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which the Hearing is conducted must say so at the Hearing before the proceedings go any further and these comments will be minuted.

9.7.5 Outcome

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 or the decision to exclude, suspend, require the removal of, or expel a pupil was a reasonable one, and will decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and/or
- make recommendations.

The Panel's decision may be notified orally at the Hearing or subsequently, and the decision and reasons for the decision shall be confirmed in writing by the Panel within seven term-time 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 findings, the reasons for the decision and recommendations will be sent to the parent, the Chair of Governors, the Head of School and, where relevant (and appropriate), any person about whom the complaint has been made, and will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Governors and the Head of School.

10. Records

The School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to a Stage 2 or Stage 3 complaint, all actions taken by the School about the complaint, and whether the



complaint is resolved at Stage 2 or proceeds to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel Hearing, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

11. Review

Following the resolution of a Stage 2/Stage 3 formal complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld or not), the reasons for the complaint and the procedure which was followed will be reviewed by the School to consider whether the complaint represents any systemic issues within the School which may need to be addressed, and whether any improvements can be made to how the School operates and/or how the complaints procedure operates. That review will be documented.

12. Persistent correspondence

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

13. Use of personal data

The complaints procedure involves private proceedings. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceedings shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notices, copies of which are available on the School website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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.



The above may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notices and 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 School's Data Protection policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notices, Data Protection policy and Retention of Records policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

14. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Written complaints received by the School in relation to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated by the School and the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days.

For EYFS, the School will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, a written record of all complaints made in any specified period, together with the action taken by the School as a result of each complaint, which must include details of whether the complaint was upheld. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. The contact details for Ofsted and the ISI are below:

- Ofsted: 0300 123 1231; enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- ISI: 020 7600 0100; concerns@isi.net; CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

15. Record of Formal Complaints

During the academic year 2023-2024 no formal complaints were made to the School.



Appendix 1

Formal Complaint Investigation Log

This log is to be completed by the Head of School (or their nominee).

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| Name of person making the complaint | |
| Date received by the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) | |
| Date of acknowledgement | |
| Person writing to acknowledge | |
| Nominee (if appointed) | |
| Nature of complaint | |
| Actions to be completed | |
| Likely timescale of looking into the matter | |
| People submitting evidence and form of evidence | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Date the findings are presented to the Head of School (or the Chair of Governors) | |
| The Head of School's (or the Chair of Governors') decision | |
| Date of notification of the Head of School's decision to parents (must be within 15 term-time days of receipt of the complaint) | |
| Lessons learned and associated actions | |
| Letter to parents confirming School's actions | |

Appendix 2 – Complaints Procedure Timeline

The information in this appendix is a summary of the timings set out in the policy. The policy should be read in full.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

| Timing | Event |
|---|---|
| Within two term-time days of receipt of the complaint. | The investigating member of staff makes contact with the parent who has raised the complaint. |
| Within 10 term-time days of Stage 1 complaint being received by School | If matter is not resolved, parents may bring a Stage 2 complaint. |

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

| Timing | Event |
|--|---|
| Within 2 term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint | Head’s PA acknowledges receipt of complaint. |
| Within 5 term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint | The Head of School (or their nominee) meets or speaks to the parents concerned to discuss the complaint. |
| Within 15* term-time days of receipt of Stage 2 written complaint | The Head of School (or their nominee) notifies parents of their decision and the reasons for that decision. |

*This may be extended by a further **five term-time days** if further investigation is required.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

| Timing | Event |
|---|---|
| Within 3 term-time days of receipt by parents of Stage 2 decision or the decision to exclude or remove a pupil** | Parent sends Stage 3 written complaint to the Chair to the Panel. |

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| Within 3 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 written complaint | Clerk to the Panel confirms receipt of Stage 3 complaint. |
| At least 10 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing | Clerk to the Panel sends details of Panel Hearing to the parent. |
| At least 5 term-time days prior to the Panel Hearing | Copies of any additional documents requested by the Panel are supplied to parties. Copies of any further documents the parent wishes the Panel to consider are sent to the Clerk to the Panel. |
| Within 25 term-time days of receipt of the Stage 3 written complaint | Stage 3 Panel Hearing is held. |
| Within 7 term-time days of the Panel Hearing | Decision of the Panel and reasons confirmed in writing to the parent. |

** The School will consider an extension to deadline if extenuating circumstances exist.