

Each day, discovery.



ELTHAM COLLEGE

33a Complaints Procedure

Last reviewed: March 2019



Version Control Information

Reason for Amendment	Name	Date	Main Changes
Annual Review	Bursar	August 2016	Reviewed and approved by Bircham Dyson Bell. Formatting changes.
Annual Review	Bursar	August 2017	Updated to reflect staffing changes
Review of conditional language	Bursar	Feb 2018	
Review of stage 1	AMM	Jan 2019	Inclusion of a meeting at stage 1
Annual review	HM	Feb 2019	None



1 Introduction

Eltham College has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students but we acknowledge that sometimes concerns or complaints can arise. When this happens we deal quickly and sensibly to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction.

If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure. The Complaints Procedure is also available to parents on the school website and on request from the Headmaster's Secretary.

2 Informal Resolution (Stage 1)

Most complaints and concerns are resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they need to contact their son/daughter's form teacher by email, copying in the Head of Section (i.e. the Assistant Head Lower School/Middle School/Sixth Form). In many cases, the matter is resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. Complaints must be made as soon as possible after an incident or cause for complaint arises.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or other senior member of staff may be referred back to the relevant form teacher unless the senior member of staff deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

If parents have made a complaint by letter or email, we contact them within 24 hours to acknowledge their concerns and explain how we propose to proceed. If a complaint is raised by telephone, we ask parents to put their concerns in writing in order that we may review and address them appropriately.

Should the matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the member of staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents are invited into school to meet in person with a senior member of staff. If a resolution cannot be found as a result of this meeting, parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

3 Formal Resolution (Stage 2)

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents must put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster, unless the complaint is about the Headmaster, when the complaint must be made in writing addressed to the Chairman of Governors and will be dealt with by the Governor nominated to deal with parental complaints (Nominated Governor). The parent must set out in their complaint what they think might resolve the issue. The Headmaster or the Nominated Governor, as the case may be, decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. This may involve an investigation of the matter, usually by the Deputy Head, who will be asked to carry out the investigation and make a written report for the Headmaster.

In most cases, the Deputy Head (or the Nominated Governor as appropriate) meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within three working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Written records of all meetings, and interviews held in relation to the complaint, the outcome, and any actions taken by the school (regardless of whether or not the complaint was upheld) are made and retained for a period of seven years.



The complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it is limited to the Headmaster or the Nominated Governor, Deputy Head and those directly involved. In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman of Governors may also need to be informed.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the College aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety is at risk or it becomes necessary to refer matters to the police. Parents are fully informed in such circumstances, unless this were to be in contravention of the school's formal obligations under the terms of our Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

Once the Headmaster and Deputy Head or the Nominated Governor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision is made and parents are informed of the decision in writing together with brief reasons for that decision. The decision is taken and communicated to the parents within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.

If parents are still not satisfied with the Headmaster's or the Nominated Governor's decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Please note that if the complaint is made during a school holiday period or the time within which it is to be dealt with enters the school holiday period the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to make contact with staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.

The number of complaints registered in the last full academic year under this formal procedure is provided in Appendix 2.

4 Panel Hearing (Stage 3)

If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's or the Nominated Governor's written decision, they may request that their complaint is heard by a complaints panel. They need to make their request in writing addressed to the Deputy Chairman of Governors within 14 days of receipt of the written decision. The request must set out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the decision and what they think might resolve the issue. The matter is then referred to a complaints panel which will consider the complaint and the decision.

The Panel consists of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and running of the College (see Appendix 1 as to who may be suitable to serve as an independent member of the panel).

Parents receive confirmation from the Deputy Chairman of Governors that a Complaints panel is to be convened and a hearing is arranged to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days of receipt of the notice from the parents that they are not satisfied with the original decision.

The Panel decides on the procedure to be followed at the hearing and who will attend at the hearing. The Panel may require the attendance of the Headmaster or any other member of the school's staff at the hearing.

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 are supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend provided they are not legally qualified. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.



The parents are given every opportunity to state their case at the Panel.

If possible, the Panel, after due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, makes a decision without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel decides how it should be carried out. Following such further investigations and after due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel reaches a decision. A decision is made and communicated to the parents in writing together with brief reasons for it within ten days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel shall be final and there shall be no further review or reconsideration of the complaint.

A copy of the findings and any associated recommendations is provided to the complainant, and where relevant to the person complained about; a copy of findings and recommendations is also available on the college premises for inspection by the Governors and the Headmaster. The decision of the Panel is final and there will be no further review or reconsideration of the complaint.

Please note that if parents request a Panel hearing shortly before or during a school holiday period, the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to make contact with staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially.

A written record of the panel hearing, the outcome and any actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether or not it was upheld) is kept for seven years.

Correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except in so far as is required of the college by Part 7 paragraph 33(k) of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education & Skills Act 2008 may request access to them.



APPENDIX 1: Complaints Procedure - Independent Member of the Panel

The DFE has given the following guidance as to who may serve as an independent panel member:

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.

APPENDIX 2: Number of complaints registered under formal procedure (i.e. Stage 2 or 3) in the previous academic year

For the academic year 2017/8, the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure was six.