



# Complaints Procedure

*This policy applies to all sections of Charlotte House School including EYFS.*

Staff responsible:	Bursar
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Approved by Board of Governors:	September 2020
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Updated	November 2020
Related policies:	Anti-bullying Policy Behaviour & Sanctions Policy Safeguarding
This document also appears on:	Website ISI Portal

Charlotte House School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. We encourage parents to be involved in their daughters' education and try to establish a warm and friendly rapport with parents so that any problems can be aired informally and issues sorted out quickly.

## What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint may arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure:

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Concerns or complaints can be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If the matter has been raised by email or letter then receipt will normally be acknowledged by the school within two working days. Matters relating to the education or general welfare of a pupil should normally, in the first instance, be referred to the Form Tutor.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the Head feels it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally
- The school will normally resolve all complaints or concerns and report back to parents within 10 working days. In practice many issues are resolved within a much quicker time scale.
- A written record of all concerns and complaints, including the date they were received and the action taken will be made by the Form Tutor or other member of staff in receipt of the complaint. These records must be copied to the Head/Bursar to maintain a central file.
- Should the Tutor and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 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. Receipt of the complaint will normally be acknowledged within two working days. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, on the appropriate course of action to take.
- In the event that the complaint is against the Head, then it should be sent to the Chair of Governors in writing. In such cases the procedure outlined below will be conducted by either the Chair or another Governor nominated by the Chair.
- In most cases The Head will seek to meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter as soon as possible but, during the school term within 7 days and, during the school holiday period, within 21 days, of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint
- It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out, but once the Head is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision, and the reasons for it, in writing normally within 15 working days from the date of the complaint being received. If the matter is complex then this timescale may be extended by the Head by up to a further 10 working days and the complainant will be notified of this
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the more formal stage 3 of this procedure.

## Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following failure to reach an earlier resolution at Stage 2), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors or in her/his absence or in the case of a complaint against the Head in which the Chair has already been involved at Stage 2, the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days but not longer than 21 days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require further particulars of the complaint, or any related matter, to be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing
- If parents wish, they can be accompanied to this meeting by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate
- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it is to be carried out
- After considering the facts the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations which it will complete within 10 days of the hearing. The Chair will write to the parents to inform them of this decision and the reasons for it. This information will also be passed to the Head and teachers concerned, and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint
- The Panel's decision is final and a copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations is available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher.

## Timescales

It may be necessary to extend timescale relating to arranging meetings where periods of time spanning school holidays are involved.

## Written records

Written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with either Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be kept by the school whether resolved or not. Parents have a right to request the total number of formal complaints made during the preceding school year, even when this number is zero. This record will include:

- the number of complaints received
- whether the complaint was resolved following the Stage 2 formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing; and
- what action has been taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

## Early Years Foundation Stage

- A record of complaints will be kept for at least three years
- Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe we are not fulfilling the EYFS requirements:
  - Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)]
  - ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)
- Complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint
- ISI will be provided upon request, a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint

The school wishes to work closely with parents for the benefit of their daughters. Therefore parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where any legal obligation prevails, ie, in the course of a school's inspection.

## Monitoring and Review

The school's Senior Management Team will monitor and review concerns and complaints raised under Stage 1 on a regular basis. Formal complaints raised under Stage 2 or Stage 3 will be reported on a termly basis to the governing body for review. Additionally, the Chair of Governors and Head monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. They examine this log on an annual basis. This policy is approved by the governing body and reviewed by them on an annual basis.

## Complaints in the past year

The number of formal complaints where Stages 2 or 3 were actioned in the School year 2019-2020 was 1 (Stage2)

## ANNEXE TO COMPLAINTS POLICY

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC PROVISIONS

It is acknowledged that the pandemic may affect all aspect of School procedures. This may be as a result of enforced closure (in full or specific year groups), self-isolation by staff or pupils, absence of key staff.

Whilst every effort will be made to adhere to the timescales and procedures outlined in the Complaints Policy there may be a need to vary these where necessary whilst the pandemic situation is ongoing.

#### The Head

Even if the School is closed or if the Head is required to work from home she will continue to fulfil the duties of the Head in relation to dealing with complaints. Should the Head become unwell and be absent from the School, or be unlikely to be able to fulfil her duties for a period of more than 14 days, then the Governors will appoint an Acting Head who will assume all the designated responsibilities of the Head within this policy.

#### Timescales

The time limit for acknowledging receipt of a Stage 2 formal complaint will be increased to five days from two. However, we would hope to respond within the two day period wherever possible. All other time scales quoted in the policy may be extended by up to a further 14 days, at the discretion of the Head, should that become necessary. In exceptional circumstances, for example where a member of staff is on long term sick leave, it may be necessary to extend time scales by a longer duration. Where it becomes necessary to extend the timescales you will be notified of this within the original timeframes stated in the Policy. Any open ended extension will be reviewed every seven days and you will be kept informed of the progress.

#### Meetings

At the discretion of the Head or Chair of Governors it may be deemed appropriate to hold meetings by conference telephone call or video conferencing where a face to face meeting is not possible or would present a risk to those in attendance. Should such a meeting take place it will do so under rules of strict confidentiality. We would ask you not to make a recording of the meeting for any purpose and likewise the meeting will not be recorded by the School. Written minutes of the meeting will be taken by the School and a copy of these minutes can be provided to you upon request.

#### Urgent Matters

If the nature of your complaint relates directly to the welfare or wellbeing of a pupil then the Head will ensure that it is dealt with as a priority, with respect to Safeguarding procedures.