



The Chalfonts Community College

Complaints Policy

2022-2023

Approved by:	RFL Committee	Date: 22 March 2022
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Last reviewed on:	March 2022
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Next review due by:	September 2023
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1. Principles

The School Complaints Procedure sets out to ensure that:

- the School listens and acts on complaints
- all complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and promptly
- wherever possible, the School will find a resolution
- Complainants will not suffer as a result of a complaint.

This procedure is not intended to replace the normal discussions regarding problems and concerns which take place in school on a day-to-day basis. It is only where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions that further steps may need to be taken. This procedure applies to all staff.

2. Definition of Complaints

In most cases, concerns will be dealt with by staff before they reach the stage of a formal complaint. Where a complaint is made, it is helpful if staff record the steps taken to resolve the issue informally and to keep notes of discussions. However, it is recognised that teachers do not want to discourage parents from voicing concerns by formally logging every issue raised. It is for the school staff to determine how they wish to approach this issue.

3. Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- i. Admissions
- ii. Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- iii. Safeguarding matters
- iv. Exclusion
- v. Whistle-blowing
- vi. Staff grievances
- vii. Staff discipline
- viii. Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.
- ix. Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.
- x. This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints.
- xi. This procedure does not apply to issues concerning Admissions; Exclusions; Special Educational Provision; School reorganisation; Curriculum (including public examinations, school records on individual pupils, etc.); Grievances by Staff or Child Abuse. These matters are already provided for by existing statutory procedures, copies of which can be obtained from the School.

All other complaints are handled by the School according to the arrangements set out below.

4. Aims and Objectives

The School will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. Sufficient opportunity will be provided for any complaint to be fully discussed with the aim of finding a resolution through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

5. Complaints Procedure

Most complaints are best dealt with informally.

If you have a child at the school and your concern is about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher or Year Leader. If you do not have a child at the school please discuss the matter with the Vice Principal

5.1 Stage 1 – Informal

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the relevant member of staff, or that the concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, please make an appointment to see the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal considers any such complaint very seriously and most complaints can be resolved at this stage.

5.2 Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Principal

- i. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, you (the complainant) should put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Principal, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that you consider should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.
- ii. An investigation will be carried out by either the Principal or one of the Assistant Principals, provided that they have not been involved up to this point. The scope of the investigation will be documented to ensure that all aspects are covered. The investigator will offer the complainant a meeting and will speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, the meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
- iii. The investigator will put their findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant.
- iv. Any complaint relating to the Principal must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors (or Vice-chair in the absence of the Chair) who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a Governor to investigate in the same way as outlined above.

5.3 Stage 3 - Review by the Chair of Governors

5.3.1 Notification

- i. If the Complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaint under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may write to the Clerk to the Governors asking for the complaint to be reviewed by the Chair of Governors, within five school days of receiving the letter confirming the outcome following Stage 2.

- ii. The Complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided, but should clearly set out how and why the Complainant does not accept the findings made under Stage 2.

5.3.2 Acknowledgement

The Complainant's letter will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement letter will confirm the date that the formal complaint was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit.

5.3.3 Review

- i. The Chair of Governors will be provided with all documentation relating to the complaint within five school days of receipt of the letter requesting a review under Stage 3, including the record of the Stage 1 informal procedure (if applicable), the original letter of complaint or Complaint Form, any documentation provided by the Complainant with their complaint, all investigation records under Stage 2, and the letter of outcome under Stage 2.
- ii. The Chair of Governors will review all of the documentation received and consider the matters raised in complaint and the investigation carried out under Stage 2. The Chair of Governors will only speak to the persons involved in the matters raised to clarify matters which were not confirmed during the Stage 2 investigation, if believed necessary. Where the Chair of Governors does speak to a student or a member of staff whose conduct is in issue, they will be accompanied as outlined under Stage 2.
- iii. If the Chair of Governors deems it to be appropriate in relation to the matters raised, the Complainant will be offered a meeting to discuss the issues raised. If a meeting is deemed appropriate, it will usually take place after the review has been completed with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.

5.4 Stage 4 – Submit the complaint to the complaint panel

- i. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the investigator, she/he may request that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body which will comprise a minimum of 3 people, at least 2 of which will be Governors and which will include one person who is independent of the management and running of the school. Members of the Panel will be appointed on the basis that they have no prior knowledge of the complaint. The request must be in writing, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors at the school, within 10 school days of the response from stage 2 being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
- ii. The Department for Education has issued guidance in relation to the appointment of the independent Complaint Panel member as follows:

Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person, our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing 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... Schools will of course have their own views.

- iii. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days. Within 15 school days of receipt of the complainant's letter the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body together with the complainant and relevant representatives of the school. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the school and the members of the Panel. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will not be allowed.
- iv. The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel.
- v. The Panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about - available for inspection on the school premises by the Trustees and the Principal
- vi. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the Clerk to the Governors will notify all concerned.
- vii. If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been completed and the matter closed.
- viii. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing
- ix. 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 162A of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them.
- x. The decision of the panel is final. If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

6. Persistent complaints

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- i. Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- ii. Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- iii. Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- iv. Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out

- v. Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- vi. Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value
- vii. Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

- viii. If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:
 - ix. Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
 - x. Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
 - xi. Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
 - xii. Put any other strategy in place as necessary
- xiii. Stopping responding
- xiv. We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:
 - xv. We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
 - xvi. We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- xvii. The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience
- xviii. Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.
- xix. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body monitors the Complaints Procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal will log all formal complaints received by the School and record how they were resolved. Governors will examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

8. Availability

A copy of this procedure is available to all parents and members of the public on request and is published on the Academy's website.

History

Date	Issue	Status	Comments
March 2022		Addition Amendments & Addition New	3. Scope (new) replaces Introduction in old policy 5. Complaints Stage 3 addition Stage 4 amended and addition 6. Persistent complaints