



The Chalfonts Community College

Complaints Policy

2023-2024

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1. Principles

The 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. School reorganisation
- ix. Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.
- x. Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.
- xi. This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints.

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. Recording Keeping and Confidentiality

Complaints and concerns will be dealt with confidentially for all those involved and we expect complainants to also observe that same confidentiality. Complainants should not discuss the matters publicly on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter or via Group Chat applications. Should they do so, this may delay resolution of the complaint and could potentially be prejudicial to the complaint.

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

6. 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 a Vice Principal

6.1 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 contact a Vice Principal. The Vice Principals consider any such complaint very seriously and most complaints can be resolved at this stage.

6.2 Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Principal

- i. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, you (the complainant) should put the complaint in writing, using the Complaints Form (Appendix 1) addressed to the Principal setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations.
- ii. An investigation will be carried out by either the Principal or a member of the senior leadership team, 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.

6.3 Stage 3 - Review by the Chair of Governors

6.3.1 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.

6.3.2 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.

6.3.3 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.
- 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.

6.4 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 3 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:

iii.

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.

- iv. 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.
- v. 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.
- vi. 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
- vii. 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.
- viii. 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.
- ix. 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
- x. 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.
- xi. 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.

7. Vexatious complaints

The Chalfonts Community College is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take

action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- i. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- ii. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Complaints Policy
- iii. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- iv. raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- v. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- vi. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- vii. makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- viii. uses threats to intimidate
- ix. uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- x. knowingly provides falsified information
- xi. publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Principal or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying a vexatious marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact The Chalfonts Community College causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

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 The Chalfonts Community College.

8. Unreasonably persistent complaints

If, despite all stages of the complaint procedure being followed the complainant tries to re-open the same issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this Complaints Policy, the Chair of

Trustees may write to the Complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, and that continued correspondence will be considered to be vexatious and that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Should the complainant contact the school again on the same issue, this may be viewed as serial or persistent. In this situation the School may choose not to respond.

A complaint will not be marked as serial before the complainant has completed the procedure and if it is, it will be the complaint marked as serial and persistent rather than the complainant.

Persistent or serial complaints could be considered as:

- i. complaints that are repetitious, obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific
- ii. insistence upon pursuing complaints lacking value or merit (following previous concluded investigations) and/or
- iii. insistence upon pursuing unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- iv. refusal to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
- v. complaints demanding redress that lack any serious purpose or value.
- vi. Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- vii. 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
- viii. Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- ix. A complainant will not be marked as serial for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, no matter which stage the complaint has reached.

Steps we may take if the complaint if it is vexatious or unreasonably persistent

- i. Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- ii. Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- iii. Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- iv. Put any other strategy in place as necessary
- v. Stop responding
- vi. We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:
 - We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns

- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
 - The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience
 - 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.
- vii. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

Appendix 1 - The Chalfonts Community College Complaint form

Please complete and return to the Principal, (by email to pa@Chalfonts.org for the attention of the Principal) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. If your complaint is about the Principal, please email the Chair of Governors ChairofGovernors@Chalfonts.org and the Clerk to the Governors SueLittman@Chalfonts.org

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

**Day time telephone number: Evening
telephone number:**

Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

**Are you attaching any paperwork? Or do you think any paperwork that the school has is relevant?
If so, please give details.**

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

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
May 2023		Amendments	3. Removal of duplications 5 Change to SLT Review by Chair of Governors Other: Grammatical and formatting changes
Sept 2023		Addition Amendment Addition Amendment Addition	5. Record Keeping and Confidentiality - new 5.2.1 addition 6. Vexatious Complaints - new 7. Unreasonable persistent complaints – updated Appendix - Addition