

Queen's College London
Queen's College Preparatory School
(including Early Years Foundation Stage)



Complaints procedure

Reviewed August 2019
Next review August 2020

Introduction

1. This procedure is for use by parents and guardians of current pupils of Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School (hereafter 'the School') in circumstances in which they have a complaint or concern regarding their own or their daughter's treatment and which does not fall within the scope of other procedures.

Definitions

2. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be put forward if a parent thinks that the School has, for example,
 - Done something wrong
 - Failed to do something it should have done
 - Acted unfairly
3. A complaint may be put forward regarding the School as a whole, about a specific department in the School or about an individual member of staff. Further guidance for parents is in Appendix 2 at the end of this policy.
4. A 'working day' for the purposes of this document is defined as Monday to Friday during term time. During holidays the School will do what it reasonably can to reply promptly to parents and to follow the outlined procedures. It may be the case that, due to the unavailability of key individuals (staff, pupils and parents), responding in full to a parental complaint can only be completed during term time.
5. The School actively encourages engagement of parents with staff, including senior management, over any issue, however minor, which is affecting their daughter's education. The School may receive several communications of this nature on any given day in term time. It is therefore necessary to have some limitations as to what can be categorised as a Complaint for the purposes of the School's record keeping.
6. For this reason, a 'Concern' is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction which is sufficiently serious to be brought to the attention of the Principal/Headmistress, but which is resolved without recourse to a meeting with him/her. Expressions of dissatisfaction which result in a meeting with the Headmistress/Principal directly, or which reach the Formal stage, are classified as Complaints. Separate files are maintained of Complaints and Concerns.

Records

7. The School will make written records of all Complaints and Concerns, the date on which they were received, any meetings or interviews held in relation to the Complaints and Concerns, and the process of their resolution. The records will include any actions taken by the School as a result of the Complaint or Concern (regardless of whether they were upheld).
8. The following information may be recorded by the School:
 - Date when the issue was raised
 - Name of parent
 - Name of pupil
 - Brief statement of issue
 - Location of detailed file
 - Staff member handling the issue
 - Brief statement of outcome
 - Action taken by the School

Stage 1 - Informal Process

9. It is hoped that most issues will be resolved informally and within five working days. Parents who are dissatisfied should in the first instance raise their concerns informally with an appropriate member of staff such as their daughter's Form Tutor, who may in turn pass the matter to a more senior colleague.
10. Expressions of dissatisfaction will be acknowledged as soon as practicable and within five working days. Parents will be told what is happening as a result of their concern and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.
11. Should the matter not be resolved to the parent's satisfaction within 15 working days, the parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with the Formal Process outlined below.

Stage 2 - Formal Process

12. If the parents remain dissatisfied following Stage 1, they should put their complaint in writing, addressed to the Headmistress/Principal, within three working days. If the Headmistress/Principal, or a decision made by her/him, is the subject of the complaint, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Council, c/o Clerk to the Council, 43-49 Harley Street, London, W1G 8BT.

13. In some cases, parents may feel sufficiently concerned to put forward their issue in writing directly to the Headmistress/Principal (or the Chair of the Council if the Headmistress/Principal is the subject of the complaint) without going through the Informal stage outlined above. In these circumstances, the issue will usually be referred, having informed the parents, to the relevant teacher/staff member unless the recipient of the concern deems it inappropriate for that person to deal with it.
14. Having received the written complaint, the Headmistress/Principal will acknowledge receipt within three working days and will either investigate the matter personally, or delegate the investigation to a senior member of staff. Written records of all meetings and interviews in relation to the complaint will be kept and, if the investigation has been delegated, a report for the Principal will be prepared.
15. If the Headmistress/Principal is the subject of the complaint or has been materially involved in circumstances directly involved with the complaint, the Chair of the Council will investigate and respond in writing to the parents directly.
16. Once the investigation is complete, the Headmistress/Principal (or Chair of Council if the Headmistress/Principal is the subject of the complaint) will inform the parents in writing of her/his conclusions. It is aimed that this should take place within ten working days of the original Stage 2 Formal Complaint being received. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.
17. If parents remain dissatisfied, they should apply for a review hearing (Stage 3).

Stage 3 (Review Hearing):

18. A Review Hearing is a review of the decision taken at Stage 2 by the Headmistress/Principal (or in circumstances where the formal complaint concerns the Principal, the Chair of Council). The Complaints Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.
19. Parents must apply in writing for a Review only after the Stage 2 process above has been exhausted. The letter must be addressed to the Clerk to the Council, 43-49 Harley Street, London, W1G 8BT and should be sent within three working days of the date of written notification of the decision. In their written request,

the parents must state the grounds upon which they are requesting the Panel Hearing as well as their desired outcome, and provide all relevant documents.

20. The Clerk to the Council will respond to the request for a Review Hearing within three working days.
21. The Review Panel will comprise at least two members of the Council and one person, nominated by the Chair of the Council, who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The members of the panel will, so far as is reasonably possible, have no previous detailed knowledge of the case, or of the pupils and parents, and will not usually include the Chair of the Council. The panel will elect its own Chair.
22. The role of the Review Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
 - a. the documents provided by both parties and
 - b. any representations made by the parents and the Principaland to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is upheld in whole or in part.
23. It is not within the powers of the Review Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Review Panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.
24. The Review Hearing will take place at the School or such other place as the Chair of the Review Panel should determine. The hearing should take place within 15 working days of receipt of the application for the review hearing.
25. Those present at the hearing will normally be:
 - The Review Panel
 - The Headmistress/Principal (unless this is considered inappropriate because s/he is the subject of the complaint)
 - Parents or those with parental responsibility
 - The pupil (if appropriate)
 - Clerk to the Council or another appropriate member of staff to minute the hearing.

Should the parents decide that they do not wish to attend the Review Hearing, the proceedings should nonetheless take place in their absence.

25. The applicants for a Review Hearing may be accompanied by a friend or a member of staff acting as a friend if required and are asked to inform the Review Panel three working days in advance of the hearing if this will be the case.
26. The Review Hearing is not a legal proceeding and legal representation is not appropriate. If the parents wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they must notify the Clerk to the Governors of this at least 5 working days prior to the Hearing. The parents should note that the Complaints panel will wish to speak to the parents directly, and this person will not be permitted to address the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
27. Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of the relevant documents. The parents shall be entitled to copies of any documents that will be considered at the Review Hearing.
28. The proceedings will be chaired by one member of the Review Panel and conducted in a formal manner. A minute will be kept of the main points that arise. If the Headmistress/Principal considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the chairman of the Review Panel may require that the name of that person, and the reason for withholding it, may be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chair may direct that the person be identified.
29. The Chair of the Panel will explain the procedure to all present at the beginning of the Hearing. The Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses and all statements made at the Hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled to write their own notes.
30. The parents will be given the opportunity to put forward their point of view. The Review Panel can investigate further as it sees fit.
31. The requirements of natural justice will apply. If for any reason the parents are dissatisfied with any aspect of the Hearing, they must inform the Chair of the Panel at the time and ask the clerk to note their dissatisfaction and the reasons for it.
32. All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, adjourn or terminate the Hearing if these expectations are not met. If the Hearing is terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be noted.

33. When the Chair of the Panel considers that all the issues have been sufficiently discussed, he/she will conclude the Hearing. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, a process which it shall complete within five working days of the hearing.
34. The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents, the Headmistress/Principal and, where relevant, the person complained about, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within five working days of the Hearing being concluded. A copy of these findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection at the School premises by any member of Council and by the Headmistress/Principal.
35. The decision of the Panel will be final and will represent the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.
36. It is important to note that in exceptional circumstances, in order to ensure a fair decision-making process, deviation from the foregoing procedure may be authorised by the Review Panel. Parents will be notified of any such deviations relevant to any review that they request. Any such deviation will be within the standards set out in The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
37. Whether complaints are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a Review Panel hearing, parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and, so far as reasonably possible, all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be treated confidentially within the requirements of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
38. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year is available from the School upon request.

Early Years Foundation Stage

39. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. If parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint concerning the school's EYFS provision, they are entitled to make a complaint direct to Ofsted and/or ISI if they so wish.

Appendix 1: Contact details:

Contact details for Ofsted are as follows:

Royal Exchange Buildings
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
(Tel: 0300 123 1231)

Independent Schools Inspectorate

Contact details for the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) are as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Tel: 0207 600 0100

Email: concerns@isi.net

Appendix 2: Advice for Parents

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially in accordance with this policy.

Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School welcome suggestions and comments from parents, and take seriously complaints and concerns they may raise.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response in accordance with this policy.

The School wishes to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- the School responds to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents are reassured that the School listens to and takes complaints seriously
- the School takes action where appropriate.

1 How should I complain?

Please follow the procedure set out above.

2 I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Please contact a member of staff as stipulated above.

3 I am not sure whether to complain or not

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School in accordance with the above procedure to discuss your concerns. This will hopefully help you to decide if you wish to make a formal complaint.

4 What will happen next?

If parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the above procedure.

5 What happens about confidentiality?

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect, and information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis. In some cases (as referred to above), the Chair of Council and other members of the Council may also need to be

informed. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents in good faith should not adversely affect the pupils.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint, and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police and / or children's social care, in which case the School's child protection procedures would be followed and information shared in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Any action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially in accordance with the relevant school procedures.

6 What records will be kept?

There is a confidential written record of all formal complaints made with a note of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or whether they proceed to a panel hearing, along with what action was taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

7 Is there anyone I can talk to outside of Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School?

If you have a complaint or concern which you feel cannot be addressed directly with the College or the Prep School, you can contact OfSTED directly on 0300 123 1231 or ISI on 0207 600 0100 and they will advise you how to proceed.

The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.