

Liverpool College Complaints Procedure



Mission Statement

Liverpool College values the dignity of each individual and promotes the development of character and learning through a commitment to high standards within a caring community.

Core Values

We recognise that all pupils have different talents and strive to ensure that every pupil has an equal opportunity to find and develop the talents they do possess


We believe that the development of character, creativity intellect and spirituality, are the primary aims of education.

We work together to create a happy and caring school community which is engaged in our local community and the wider world

We pursue high standards in every area of school life

This is a whole College policy and applies to the Primary and Secondary Phase as well as Boarding, Breakfast Club and after school activities.



Approved Date	23 rd September 2024
Review Date	23 rd September 2025
Principal	 Mrs A Haynes

Liverpool College Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Liverpool College has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure.

This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school. These procedures are available on the College website and a written copy is available on request. The framework contained in this document has been designed to enable complaints to be dealt with through an open and transparent process.

1. Aims

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- be impartial and non-adversarial
- facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- respect complainant's desire for confidentiality
- treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation process
- throughout the process we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals

2. Definitions and scope

A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought".

A **complaint** is defined as an "expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions or a lack of action".

Liverpool College takes informal concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In such cases, the formal procedure outlined in this policy will be followed.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The complainant will receive a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they follow these procedures, co-operate with the college throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication

promptly, ask for assistance if needed, treat all those involved with respect and do not publish details about the complaint on social media.

An investigator will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will interview all relevant parties and consider records and any written evidence. They will prepare a comprehensive report to the Principal or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions.

A complaints co-ordinator will keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure and make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the Principal and Chair of Governors.

A Committee Chair will chair the meeting, ensuring everyone is treated with respect throughout and make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee and are allowed to present their case.

Clerk to Governors is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Panel

4. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

4.1 Timescales:

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

Where complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

5. Stages of complaint

5.1 Stage 1: Informal

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision of or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Principal, either in person, by letter, telephone or email.

The college will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days and investigate and provide a response within 10 school days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, this can be escalated to Stage 2

If the complaint is about the Principal, the complainant should contact the Clerk to the Governors, either by email or by telephone, outlining their concerns. The Chair of Governors will consider the complaint and will nominate a governor, who will arrange to speak with or informally meet with the complainant to discuss their concerns. The nominated Governor may include a note taker at this stage. The nominated Governor will record details of the complaint, including dates. If the complaint is not resolved within 5 working days or if the nominated governor fails to reach informal resolution of the matter with the complainant, the complainant will be advised to proceed to stage 2 of the complaint's procedure. The complainant will be given 15 school days in which to submit the stage 2 complaint.

5.2 Stage 2: Formal

The formal stage involves the complainant submitting the complaint to the Principal. There is a complaint proforma at Appendix A which should be used to submit the complaint within 15 school days of receiving the form.

The Principal will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 school days.

The Principal will arrange for an investigation to be carried out. The Principal's written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 15 school days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the Clerk to the Governors within 15 school days.

If the complaint is regarding the Principal and informal resolution was not agreed, the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of the Governors on the complaint proforma attached to this document, via the Clerk to the Governors. The Chair of the Governors will consider the complaint and then arrange to meet with the complainant, with another governor or an independent person. If possible, resolution of the matter will be sought at this stage. The Chair of the Governors will be mindful of ways to reach resolution. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid.

The Chair of the Governors will keep a written note of the meeting. He or she may seek further information as necessary based on that meeting, but will then write to the complainant within 15 days of the date of receipt of the written complaints pro-forma, detailing his decision.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the decision reached during the second stage of the complaint's procedure, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

5.3 Stage 3: Panel Hearing

Stage 2, formal complaints will be escalated to a panel.

The panel will be convened by the Clerk to the Governors. It must consist of two Governors who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and one panel member who must be independent of the management and running of the school. One of the Governors will act as Chair of the Panel.

The panel will have access to all relevant records relating to the complaint, within GDPR.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The Clerk will aim to find a date within 15 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead, using only written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting.

At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. At the meeting each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, by the Chair of the Panel, will consider it on a case by case basis.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and the school representative(s) have presented their cases they will be asked to leave and the evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. They will provide copies of the minutes of the hearing, the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint. They will also make a copy available to the Principal.

The committee can:

- **Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part**
- **Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part**

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days of the panel hearing.

Procedure for Members of the Public

The process for resolving complaints follows the same principles as above. There are two stages:

- Stage 1 Informal: The Principal will instigate an investigate and respond to all complaints in writing within 15 working days.
- Stage 2 Formal: If a complainant is not satisfied with the Principal's response, he or she should write to the Chair of Governors who will respond in writing within 15 working days. The decision of the Chair of Governors is final.

Records

A written record will be kept of all complaints raised and the stage at which they were resolved. Complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and GDPR

Management of Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the College will remain mindful of ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate for one of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review College policies in light of the complaint.

Complaints may be withdrawn in writing at any time.

The College recognises and acknowledges the entitlement to complain and hopes to work with complainants in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

Review of the procedure

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Wherever possible, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals unless it is necessary to do so.

The College is committed to on-going improvement. Therefore, as well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to College improvement.

When individual complaints are heard the College will identify any underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the College and the Governing Body helps in evaluating the College's overall performance.

Serial, Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints

Complaints could be deemed serial or persistent if the person making them:

- repeatedly makes the same complaint seeking an unrealistic outcome
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint
- makes frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint.

The College will, when it has done everything that it can, cease to respond if all of the following conditions are met:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's needs.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the College's position and their options (if any).
- The complainant contacts the College repeatedly but makes substantially the same points each time.

The College will also cease to respond if there is reason to believe the individual intends to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Complaints could be deemed unreasonable if the person making them does so:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing that the complaint is false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information from a variety of social media platforms, for example, What's App, websites and newspapers.

Liverpool 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 the College. We do not, however, expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour.

Complaints not covered by this Complaints Procedure

This procedure does not apply to complaints where there are separate statutory procedures:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs
- School reorganization proposals
- Matters likely to require a child protection investigation
- Exclusion

- Whistle blowing
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use College premises or facilities

Other concerns, such as those relating to the leadership and management of the College, can be referred to OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. General helpline 0300 123 1231; phone number 0161 618 8524.

You may complain to the Educational Funding Agency (EFA) through their website if you believe that there is a problem with this complaints procedure or that the College is not following the terms of its funding agreement: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

Related Policies

GB02 Admissions
TL06 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
CP01 Safeguarding and Child Protection
PD08 Exclusion
MI05 Whistleblowing
SM03 Staff Conduct and Discipline
SM10 Staff Grievance
GB15 Vexatious Communication and Correspondence

Legal Framework

The Education Regulations 2014 (Part 7)

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283pdfs/uksi_20143283_en.pdf

APPENDIX I

CONFIDENTIAL

LIVERPOOL COLLEGE

**PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GENERAL COMPLAINTS
FORM TO REGISTER A FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Your name			
Pupil's name		Your relationship to pupil	
Home address including postcode			
Telephone number			
Email address			
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.			
Please turn over to complete the form			

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

Are you submitting any paperwork? If so please give details.

Your signature:

Date:

For office use only:

Date received

Date acknowledgement sent

By whom

Complaint referred to

Action taken

Date

If necessary, additional information may be included on a separate sheet, which should be signed and attached to this form)

*Persons making a complaint must register the complaint within 3 months of the incident.

Note: This form should be returned to the Principal, unless the complaint is against the Principal, in which case it should be forwarded to the Chair of Governors.

FLOWCHART OF TYPICAL PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GENERAL COMPLAINTS

