

# Charlton House Independent School



**'Love One Another'**

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Reviewed and approved by the full governing body February 2024**

**To be reviewed by FGB February 2025**

<b>Date</b>	Dec 2021	May 2022	Feb 2023	Feb 2024
<b>Reviewed by</b>	FGB	Gov DO	FGB	FGB

## Introduction

The School aims to ensure that the whole community feels happy and secure when at school. There is an awareness, however, that things can go wrong and therefore welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, staff and pupils. We take seriously any concerns and complaints that may arise. Many concerns that parents have do not necessarily call for complaint, but should still be brought to the school's attention. Help can only be given about issues that are known. This policy is available on the school's website and a hard copy can be requested from the school's office. The procedure outlined below applies to complaints from parents of pupils currently on roll at Charlton House Independent School.

Our complaints procedure aims to be:

- Impartial
- Non-adversarial
- Respectful
- Confidential
- Thorough

This policy also supports the school's aims, values and wider development.

## Definition of Terms

**Concern** - *A concern is likely to require discussion, perhaps involving a teacher, pupil and parent, and it is hoped that it can be resolved quickly by such a discussion and appropriate action. A concern is dealt with through the normal daily structures of the School. If this does not resolve the concern, then it could become a complaint.*

**Complaint** - *A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response and is likely to arise when there are issues related to physical or emotional wellbeing, or over security, or when the School's stated aims or values are being ignored.*

*A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.*

*Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint.*

The following areas are not covered by the complaints procedure as they have their own policies or procedures:

- Admissions
- School re-organisation proposals
- Statutory assessments of special education needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion

- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Curriculum
- Collective worship

Any complaints about external providers (i.e. extra-curricular clubs) should be addressed directly with the provider.

Complaints levelled at the Head Teacher are to be made in writing to the Chair of Governors. They will utilise the Governing Board's Complaints Panel and follow the process described below.

Complaints levelled at members of the Governing Board, including the Chair of Governors, are to be made in writing to the Clerk of Governors, via the School office.

All written complaints (by letter or email) should be marked as *private and confidential*.

A complaint should be raised within three months of an incident, however, the School will consider complaints raised within up to twelve months if exceptional circumstances apply (e.g. matters of Safeguarding or Child Protection).

The Headteacher will be informed of all complaints and their outcome.

A written record of all concerns and complaints is kept, no matter what stage of the procedure they are resolved.

Anyone can make a complaint; this policy is not limited to parents and carers of pupils.

### **Complaints Procedure**

The school will endeavour to deal with complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, and where appropriate, will take action.

It is the school's policy that complaints should never rebound on children or the person making the complaint.

#### **Stage 1 – Informal**

1. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved informally. We advise Parents to raise the issue with the member of staff most closely concerned with the matter as soon as possible. Please make an in-person appointment with this person to discuss the issue fully; this normally results in the matter being resolved immediately and to your satisfaction. Informal appointments can be made directly with the person most closely concerned with the matter, or via the school's office. The school's office may be contacted using the following details:

[admin@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk)

55-57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4DJ.

023 80671739

2. The member of staff will make a record of the complaint on CPOMs. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a member of the Leadership Team for advice. In this instance they will inform the parent of the outcome to their concern or complaint within five working days.
3. You may ask to meet the Head Teacher directly to raise an informal concern or complaint. Again, the matter will normally be resolved quickly and to both parties' satisfaction. Occasionally, they may refer you back to the relevant member of staff, but there may be occasions when the Head Teacher feels it is appropriate to resolve the issue informally themselves. This is still considered to be under the Stage 1 process of informal resolution. In this instance the time frame to manage the complaint is likely to be immediate and feedback will be verbal, providing that a satisfactory outcome has been achieved. It is only when or if the Parent is not satisfied with an outcome that they should proceed to the Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

## **Stage 2 – Formal**

1. If your complaint cannot be satisfactorily dealt with on an informal basis, then the Parent should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher, using the form listed as Appendix 2. The Headteacher may be contacted using the following details:

[head@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk](mailto:head@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk)

55-57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4DJ

023 80671739

A formal written complaint at Stage 2 should be sent no later than 10 working days after receiving the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint.

The Head Teacher will:

- a. Acknowledge your complaint in writing within five working days.
  - b. Decide the appropriate course of action to take.
  - c. Inform you how the matter will be dealt with.
  - d. Carry out any necessary investigations.
  - e. Send a letter to explain the conclusion to you, along with reasons for it and any action being taken or proposed. Some details may need to be withheld if they relate to another staff member or pupil.
2. In most cases, the Headteacher will arrange to meet the Parent concerned no later than ten days after receiving the written complaint. The Head Teacher will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint on CPOMs.
  3. Your complaint will remain confidential and all information treated with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head Teacher and those directly involved. The Chair of Governors may have to be informed.
  4. We cannot rule out the possibility of the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly the identities of those involved. This would only be likely to be necessary where a child's safety is involved or an illegal act has occurred. You will be kept fully informed.
  5. Information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we may not be able to pursue anonymous complaints unless exceptional circumstances apply (e.g. matters of Safeguarding or Child Protection).

6. Action, which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints, will be handled confidentially within school.
7. A Stage 2 process should not take more than twenty working days, including investigation. Occasionally school holiday periods or exceptional circumstances may lead to a longer period being required, but no longer than twenty-eight days.

**If you are not satisfied with the outcome**, you may take your complaint to Stage 3.

Stage 3 appeal will always be the final stage of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

1. If a Parent is not satisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint, the Head Teacher will advise them to refer the matter to the Chair of Governors. They should use the attached complaints form (Appendix 2) and submit it within ten working days of receiving the Stage 2 decision. They must set out details of aspects of the complaint which they remain dissatisfied about and their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which a parent wishes to rely on should also be provided, along with details of the outcome desired and confirmation as to whether they wish to attend a hearing. The Chair of Governors may be contacted using the following details:

[governorholliss@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk](mailto:governorholliss@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk)

55-57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4DJ

The Chair of Governors will:

- a. Acknowledge your complaint in writing within five working days.
  - b. Inform you how the matter will be dealt with and how matters will proceed.
  - c. Organise and lead a panel hearing within 10 working days.
  - d. Send a letter to explain the findings and recommendations to you and, where relevant, the person complained about, along with reasons for it and any action being taken or proposed. (This will also be made available on the school premises for inspection by the proprietor and the Head Teacher.)
  - e. This should normally be managed within a period of twenty days, starting from the date an acknowledgement of the complaint was sent. Factors including the availability of both parties may impact this timeframe partially.
  - f. Ofsted and/or ISI will, on request, be provided with a written record of all complaints made during a specific period and the actions taken as a result of complaints. This will include whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing.
  - g. The record of any such complaint will be kept for at least three years.
2. A Stage 3 complaint will be referred to the Governing Board complaints panel for consideration by the Chair of Governors. The Complaints 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. The remaining panel members will be made up of Governors.
  3. You will be asked to present any papers you may have for circulation before the meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend or relative. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and if the complainant intends to bring a legal representative they should inform the School at least three working days prior to the hearing. If complainants decide not to attend the hearing, the panel will nevertheless

consider the complaint in absentia, unless the complainant has indicated that they are now satisfied or do not wish to proceed further.

4. If possible, the panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five working days of the hearing. The panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Head Teacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint.
5. If your complaint has still not been resolved, you may wish to seek independent legal advice. You may also contact, Ofsted 0300 123 666 or ISI 020 7600 0100. Complainants may contact these bodies at any stage through the complaints process. Ofsted should also be contacted if it appears that there seems to be a possible breach of the EYFS requirements.
6. If a child appears to be at risk, the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and guidelines will be followed, as will, the guidelines of Southampton (or Hampshire) Children's Safeguarding Partnership. In these cases, both the parent and relevant staff will work with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, governors and also with Ofsted/ISI to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

### **Persistent correspondence**

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

### **Recording Complaints and Confidentiality**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all concerns and complaints made during Stage 1, 2 or Stage 3 of the procedure, and any action taken by the school regardless of whether the complaint was upheld or not.

Written records, statements and correspondence relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the secretary for state or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them. Ofsted and ISI will also be supplied, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action taken as a result of the complaint.

This record will state whether the complaint was resolved at a preliminary stage or progressed to a panel and will be retained by the school. All complaints that reach a formal written stage will be recorded in the summary log kept on file in the school. This log will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head Teacher to the Secretary of State or to inspectors from appropriate bodies such as Ofsted/ISI conducting and inspection under S109 of the 2008 Act. The school will keep a written record of all complaints (written or not) together with a record of the outcomes of such complaints. This will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors and be made available to inspection bodies.

In addition to the procedures above:

- If Parents and/or carers of children in the EYFS do not think that the school meet the EYFS requirements and are still dissatisfied following the process outlined above may raise the issue directly with the ISI or Ofsted:

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London. EC1A 9HA  
0207 6000 100 or [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
<http://www.isi.net/complaintsprocedure/>

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD  
0300 1234 23  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us/how-complain>

- This policy is made available to all parents, staff and pupils.
- All written records of complaints are reviewed annually by both the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors. In the year 2023/24 there were zero formal complaints under this procedure and zero panel hearings.
- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils, staff and parents.
- The Chair of Governors may be contacted using the following details:  
[chairofgovs@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk](mailto:chairofgovs@charltonhouseindependentschool.co.uk)  
55-57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4DJ.

The Governing Body of Charlton House Independent School will review this policy every 2 years, or sooner if there are any legislative changes. The Governing Body of Charlton House Independent School will also review this policy following a complaint panel meeting to ensure that it met the requirement to provide a clear, fair and efficient complaints procedure.

Reviewed and approved by the full governing body February 2024

## Appendix 1. Further Guidance from the Department for Education

- a. the complaints procedure need not apply to prospective pupils, and therefore, it does not have to cover failure to admit such pupils;
- b. the procedure only needs to apply in relation to complaints from parents of pupils, i.e. persons for whom education is being provided at the school. Therefore, the process does not need to cover complaints from parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except in cases where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school);
- c. there is no provision in the standard for complaints by pupils, even those who are adults, although a school may choose to have such a process;
- d. the requirement for a panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school means that the independent member should not only be outside the school's workforce, and not a member of governing body/proprietary body, but also should not be otherwise involved with the management of the school - for example, this might well be the case with a solicitor who regularly acts for a school;
- e. the provision requiring a complaints procedure to allow a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing, although the school can allow this if it wishes;
- f. if a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate the parent(s) exercising the right of attendance

(Source: The Independent School Standards, Guidance for Independent Schools

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/798511/Independent\\_School\\_Standards- Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798511/Independent_School_Standards- Guidance.pdf))



## Appendix 2. Complaints Form

<b>Name of complainant:</b>	
Contact details:	Address:
	Telephone:
	Email:
Preferred Contact Method and day/time	
Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant)/ pupil: Please ensure you provide all details and be as specific as possible.	
Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff, if so, who? What was discussed? What was the outcome/resolution/actions agreed?	

What resolution(s) are you seeking? Action to be taken, if any?	
Signature:	
Date:	

**For School / Chair of Governor's use:**

Date received:	
Date acknowledged and by whom:	
Complaint Outcome; Upheld or Not Upheld	
Summary of action taken:	