

Complaints Procedure

Lancing College & Lancing College Preparatory Schools



Lancing College

- 1.1 Lancing College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously concerns and complaints they may raise. This document will show you how to use our Complaints Procedure.
- 1.2 A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.
- 1.3 We wish to ensure that:
 - parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
 - we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
 - parents realise that we listen and take concerns and complaints seriously;
 - we take action where appropriate.

2 How should I complain?

- 2.1 In most cases it is best for parents to address concerns to the Housemaster or Housemistress who may be able to sort things out quickly and in an appropriate way. However, in certain circumstances, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Deputy Head, the Senior Deputy Head, the Head of the Prep School or the Head Master. You can communicate with us by letter, email, or telephone. Please be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. If you have made this communication in writing, we will endeavour to contact you within 5 working school days. An *informal* complaint will be investigated and responded to as quickly as possible, and within 14 working school days unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this.
- 2.2 **I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.**
The school is here for parents, pupils and staff and we want to hear your views and your worries. Contact a member of staff, as described above.
- 2.3 **I am not sure whether to complain or not.**
Parents are entitled to complain if they have concerns. If in doubt, you should contact the school as we are here to help. If the matter you raise cannot be resolved under the procedures referred to above, a *formal* written notice of the concern or complaint should be submitted to the Head Master.
- 2.4 **What will happen next?**
If you raise something face-to-face, by telephone or by email, it may be possible to resolve the matter on an informal basis immediately and to your satisfaction.
- 2.5 If you have made a formal complaint or suggestion in writing, we will usually contact you within five school working days to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.
- 2.6 In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further without responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issue is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible and within 28 working school days of the lodging of the complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this. This will tell you the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons

for it, and any action taken or proposed. A written record will be kept of any such action taken as a result of this complaint, regardless of whether or not it is upheld.

2.7 In the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the school will make every effort to adhere to the timescales indicated above but may require additional flexibilities as a consequence of disruption to usual working practices or staff absence.

2.8 **What happens about confidentiality?**

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head Master and those directly involved. The Chairman of the Governing Body may also need to be informed. It is the College's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children, and that pupils should not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. 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 considered to be at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. Where possible you would be fully informed about this. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Anonymous complaints will not be covered by this process. Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school. Members of staff should also consult the Whistleblowing Policy in the Staff Handbook.

2.9 **What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?**

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

2.10 If you are not satisfied, this must be made known to the Head Master as soon as possible and within a week of receipt of the school's correspondence regarding the outcome of the investigation of your complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this. The Head Master will refer the matter to the school's Conciliation Committee for a panel hearing. It is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Committee Chairman will invite you to a meeting of the panel which will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. This meeting will be scheduled as soon as is practicable and usually within 21 working school days. In the event that this is not possible, e.g. in the light of COVID-19 disruptions or staff absences, a revised timescale will be communicated. You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand, and any written information will be made available to all parties not later than 5 working school days before the hearing unless shorter notice is agreed. You will be invited to be accompanied at the panel hearing if you so wish.

2.11 The panel can make findings and recommendations, which it shall endeavour to complete within 14 working school days of the hearing, a copy of which will be:

- i) sent by email or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about;
- ii) made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body and the Head Master.

- 2.12 We hope that we shall be able to satisfy your concerns. If we are unable to do so, you may then wish to seek legal advice.
- 2.13 **Persistent correspondence:** Were repeated attempts to be made to raise the same complaint after it had been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 This procedure is made available to all current parents. It is drawn up so as to comply with Part 7 of the Regulatory Requirements of Independent Schools and Standards 17 and 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Appropriate written records are kept of concerns raised and answered informally. The Head Master keeps a written record of all formal complaints received by him, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. A record is maintained of action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). An annually updated Appendix to this policy, recording the number of formal complaints so recorded and whether they proceeded to a panel hearing, is also available on request.
- 2.16 **Does this policy apply to expulsions?**
No. These are covered by the procedures set out in the school's Behaviour and Expulsion, Removal and Review policies.

3 **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Kindergarten, Nursery, Reception children**

- 3.1 The complaints procedure for parents with children in this part of the school is similar to the whole school procedure but has some distinctive aspects for this age range.
- 3.2 For the EYFS
- A record of complaints and their outcome is kept for at least three years
 - Parents may contact Ofsted (and/or ISI – the Independent Schools Inspectorate) at any stage of the complaints' procedure if their complaint is about fulfilment of EYFS requirements. The Ofsted phone number is 0300 123 4666 and the ISI phone number is 020 7600 0100
 - All written complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements are investigated and complainants will receive notification of the outcome of the investigation within 28 school working days of receiving the complaint
 - We will provide Ofsted, and ISI, on request with a written record of all complaints made within a specified period and the action taken as a result of each complaint.
- 3.3 Various useful contact numbers can be found in section 7 of our Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy which is available in the 'College Policies' section of our website (www.lancingcollege.co.uk). Additionally, boarders and their parents can contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA; 020 7600 0100) regarding any complaint concerning their welfare.

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